MORE STORIES - MORE PAGES!

The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

OCT.

50c

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

In this issue

VICTOR CANNING

STUART PALMER

E. X. FERRARS

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

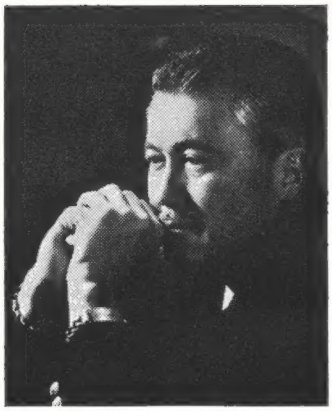
LESLIE CHARTERIS

WATCH FOR
The saint ON TV

ugly duckling

A New Story by LAWRENCE TREAT

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION



Last November, no less responsible a journal than the *Lancet,* the official organ of the British medical profession, published an article seriously proposing that the law against marijuana should be repealed. The drug, it stated flatly, is not dangerous to the extent that it would be difficult to kill anyone with it, and not addictive in the same way as opium derivatives, which require continually increasing doses to deliver the same kick. In fact, it is probably no more habit-forming or injurious to health than tobacco or alcohol.

On the positive side, though, whereas alcohol tends to generate aggressiveness, which may lead to violent crime, marijuana itself promotes passivity, which is the antithesis of the criminal mood. The criminal effects stem solely from underworld competition to control the traffic, or the need of aficionados for extra pocket-money to pay exaggerated prices for their indulgence. The legal reefer combined with a reasonable tax, suggested the *Lancet,* would keep prices within bounds while still channelling profits to the Treasury, to say nothing of eliminating the current expense of detecting and prosecuting violations of the present law. It would, in its own way, be as salutory for the budget and the burdens of enforcement as the repeal of Prohibition.

Never having personally tried even a whiff of pot, I feel almost shamefaced to confess, I am still altruistically interested to see such a sober authority leaning dizzily in the direction of a more daring extension of the same theory which has already been mooted by some very serious and high-domed social thinkers in the United States: that the solution to the whole "narcotics problem" would be simply to legalize any drug, under medical prescription, to anyone who choose to declare himself an addict.

The instant result of this startling switch would be not merely to crack the profits of dope peddling from the inflated bootleg level down to the slim margins of the discount pharmacy, but at the same time to remove the inordinate profit incentive from the business of getting new customers hooked, which is generally recognized to be the self-perpetuating power source of the present illicit system.

And the present addict, faced with the alternative of pulling a stick-up to pay the inordinate price of an illegal fix, would almost certainly prefer to register himself and get his shot for a few pennies. Even if he knew they would slip something into it which would gradually diminish his desire for more. . .

Is this too beautifully simple to be realistic?

To preserse my record of impartiality, I am obliged to note that within the same month, the incumbent U. S. Commissioner of Narcotics, Henry L. Giordano, was bitterly contesting this "illusory" solution, claiming that statistically "it is the criminal who turns to dope, usually with his eye quite open. . . We are faced with a problem of anti-social behavior. That is what the doctors don't always recognize."

Maybe, But no civil servant tries to talk himself out of a job, either.

Leon Cheslow

The® saint
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instead of the saint – III

by LESLIE CHARTERIS

When I sat down to write this, the United States had just passed a multi-billion-dollar tax-cut bill, and by the time you read this there will probably be some important indications of how far it is fulfilling its promised purpose of goosing the American economy, so I am not about to be so stupid as to lay my neck on the block with my personal prognostications on that subject. But it does trigger some graybeard meanderings about Government in general and the changes which have taken place in the social perspective since I was waiting breathlessly for the privilege of casting my first vote.

Upon signing the tax cut into law, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a brief oration to express his hope that the taxpayers recipient of this bounty would promptly rush out and spend it, almost as a patriotic duty, thereby pouring millions more dollars into circulation, which in turn would snowball into more billions as the factory chimneys smoked and the mills revved up to supply the frantic demand for more things to buy. This in spite of the fact that only in the last two years, without any such encouragement, the American buyer had increased his installment debt *by* (read this carefully: I said *by,* not *to)* ten billion dollars, to a level which already earmarked 14% of his disposable income to keep up the payments on all the stuff he was acquiring on what the British counterpart so penetratingly calls "the Never-Never".

Perish the thought that anyone should devote this windfall to reducing the liens on his car, his refrigerator, his washing machine, his television set. That way lies solvency, and the ruin of the American economy. No, let him rather rush out and make the down payment on a new dish-washer, vacuum cleaner, or electric hair-brush. By going deeper into debt, he can make America boom.

And if he finally gets in over his ears, and the floor drops out? What the hell, Uncle will take care of him. Uncle Who? Uncle Sam, of course—with his Social Security, his Unemployment Pay, and his Old Age Pension. And where does that money come from, with a National Debt increasing (the hell with exact figures, which increase even while you are trying to add them up) by *billions* of dollars every fiscal year? Oh, the Government will Manage Somehow. Governments always do, don't they?

Given a free hand, Western Man has never shown himself backward in taking advantage of credit when it was offered to him. But, hitherto and in most places, he has been somewhat held back by oldfashioned admonitions to thrift, responsibility, and a sober anticipation of the Day of Reckoning. Now, at least the American people have been officially encouraged to act, as individuals, like a Government: when in debt, write some more IOU's, and prosperity will come screeching around the corner.

It may be no coincidence that shortly before this, the United States formally adopted the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the Constitution, which made the abolition of the Poll Tax nation-wide. Thus the States which rebelled against Britain with the brave slogan of "no taxation without representation" finally repealed the last vestiges of a logical corollary, which was that there should be no representation without taxation, either.

For if people who pay no taxes at all have the votes to put over legislation, and hence taxation, which would not afflict themselves, what is there to deter them from supporting confiscatory policies which would only soak the other fellow, producing more funds for the Government to disburse for the benefit of the non-contributing indigent?

Now that that last tax cut has added what is estimated to be another million and a half American voters to the millions who already pay no income tax, the one prediction I will make is that if and when the budget should require taxes to go up again, there will be correspondingly more pressure from the free-loaders for their immunity to be continued and for the bite to be applied to "the rich", thus increasing still further the inequity between those who pay the piper and those who call the tune.

I am not picking on America particularly. I am simply noting the latest manifestation of the whole world's steady slide towards socialism. Even while half of it professes to be standing staunchly against Communism, the policies of the average "right-wing" party

in the West today would have been considered almost subversively radical by the conservatives of a hundred or two years ago.

I am resigned to the awareness that nothing so fatally betrays an old gaffers age as this kind of beard-wagging wonderment at the changes he has seen. But I am still frankly bewildered by a topsy-turvy era in which, for instance, national and international issues in most countries are the detonators for demonstrations by hordes of "students" who turn out to march, wave placards, burn flags, and smash windows, while governments tremble and scramble to take the stand advocated by the teen-age mob.

When I was a student, I was expected to get on with my studying, and leave affairs of state to my elders and betters, until I had learned enough and matured enough to earn a right to be heard; and any precocious presumption would have been greeted with icy scorn if not a swift kick in the backside. And with all its faults, I think that was a damned sight saner world.

That old English boys' magazine, *Chums,* from which we recently facsimiled an 1893 sampling expressly intended to confuse would-be biographers who are always trying to pinpoint my precise date of impact on the literary scene, was in truth one of the mainstays of my youthful reading. Singapore, where my age climbed from single to double figures, was in those pre-BOAC days a six-weeks voyage from what the expatriates persisted in calling Home, so to buy it weekly as it came out would have been a cumbersome and uncertain business; but each Christmas the red-bound annual volume of a whole year's issues was one of the most eagerly awaited treats on my list. It was bigger than a metropolitan telephone directory and seemed to weigh about ten pounds, and the joy of it was that one could read the serials straight through, in the same way that I often wished I could see the movie serials which teased my imagination from week to week.

(I remember the end of one episode of one of those flickering cliff-hangers, where the Valiant Hero was in the clutches of the Wicked Foreigners, who were threatening him with Fearful Tortures unless he told them where to find the Secret Plans. "You'll never get them," said the Hero in the subtitle. "I carry them—*here!*" And he tapped his forehead with a defiant forefinger. I never did see the next installment; but for years afterwards I can recall being awed by the bravery of such a Hero, who in his Country's Service had suffered his skull to be drilled and had the Plans sealed into the

hole in his head.)

The *Chums* serials, of which there were always two running at the same time and overlapping, reflected a very clear editorial pattern in their rotation of themes. You could count on the Pirate Story, the Lost Civilization Story (in Darkest Africa or Darkest South America), the Interplanetary Story, the Historical adventure (in such perilous periods as the Crusades, the French Revolution, or the Cavaliers and Roundheads), and the Wild West or Northwest Frontier story, among others. Frankly derivative as they may have been from the classics of Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard, Baroness Orczy, or Rudyard Kipling, they kept alive a romantic world in which villainy was unmistakenly wicked, maidens were loyal and beautiful, heroes were fearless and unselfish, the good guys always triumphed in the end despite temporary setbacks and casualties, and a boy could join in the fun and dream of having similar adventures himself when he grew up.

They were gorgeously gory, too. Dozens of minor characters were tenderized in Iron Maidens or walked the plank to feed the waiting sharks, were sacrificially eviscerated on weird altars, gobbled up by dinosaurs or Martian *gzxlpks,* vivisected by mad scientists, flogged, stretched on racks, guillotined, hung, drawn, and quartered. The horrors were not dwelt on with lingering sadism, if my memory serves me, but they were presented with a forthrightness that would give conniptions to the modern mental dieticians for the young.

In spite of which, it is now a matter of statistical record that the percentage of "juvenile delinquency" in those days was an insignificant fraction of what has been achieved in this present era of official and pressure-group censorship, designed to protect the Young for as long as possible from the horrible facts of life.

I am inclined to theorize that these phobias could only have been spawned in the minds of neurotic seniles. Because, having been fairly young myself once, I am still aware of no left-over trauma from all the printed violence and savagery which I loved to lap up in those impressionable years. They cannot even be said to have contaminated my writing: although the greater part of my stories have been devoted to battle, murder, and sudden death, they have always been handled in the same spirit of romantic adventure that lightened my early reading. I have never emphasized cruelty, brutality, and slaughter for their own sake, like some other writers whose childhood reading may have been more tenderly supervised than mine.

Nor did it occur to my parents to shelter me from the pictorial

mayhem of the silent movies of that golden age before Hollywood weakly succumbed to the threat of censorship and undertook to police itself. There was enough gruesomeness in the dungeons of the Ungodly, in that era, and rape and massacre above ground, to give a modern Sunday-school vigilante the vapors, but it didn't seem to do my generation any great harm. To adore the spectacle of Douglas Fairbanks (senior) skewering dozens of minor knaves on his flashing blade, with a laugh and a flourish, did not seem to mean than many of us in the cheering audience would go out and try it on the kids next door.

After Fairbanks came Errol Flynn, who was a good swashbuckler while he lasted, and Louis Hayward (who played the Saint a couple of times) did several passes with the cloak and sword, but the last major gambol in that field that I remember seeing was Burt Lancaster's *The Crimson Pirate,* in which he proved, doing his own stunts, that he could have done everything that Fairbanks did, and with the same flair. But Burt decided to become a serious actor and producer instead, and who shall blame him? – – except, perhaps, the superannuated adolescents like me who would still like to see more of that joyous brawling on the screen. Since then, the genre seems to have been surrendered almost exclusively to Italian producers of cut-rate chromatic epics whose stars are as musclebound as their scenarios.

About the only English-language producer who still seems to sympathize with us die-hard juveniles is Walt Disney, who has ploughed several of his cartoon millions back into regular features with live actors in stories that make no pretense of being overly adult. I saw one recently, *The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh,* which struck me as being just about the kind of film that one of those old *Chums* serials might have made; and rattling good fun it was, too.

I was brooding idly about all this when I came upon an editorial in the *Palm Beach Times* in which the writer was scratching his head over the strange phenomenon of the late Edgar Rice Burroughs' vintage creations—Tarzan, John Carter of Mars, and Carson of Venus—who are enjoying a comeback today which bewilders the publishing experts.

"Why," he asked, "the revival of Tarzan when 'darkest Africa' is merely another crisis factory on the front pages of our newspapers? Why the revival of the other characters when we now know that Venus is too hot to support life and that Mars certainly does not hold the teeming civilizations the Burroughs imagination peopled

it with?"

"Partly it is explained as middle-aged men wishing to recapture their childhoods by re-reading the books they read then, or buying them for their children to read. In other words, personal nostalgia.

"But could there be such a thing as supremacy nostalgia? Could it be that people will always be suckers for stories of man over nature, man over man, man over animal or man over plant-man. . . ?"

Could be. And for the sake of my own old-age pension, I can only hope for more of those nostalgias.

The only thing I object to is the invidious word "suckers". It will be a gray world indeed when the mere word "adventure" no longer stirs our tired sophisticated blood.

And as for regressing to our childhood reading: what other escape is there from the well-ordered gadget-infested dreariness we live in? The writers of today are chiefly obsessed with sordidness and dirt, but as sterile in their approach to it as laundromats. I myself am just about the last survivor of a school of writing which believed that a story-book hero should not only have muscles and a flashing sword or a fast gun, but that he should also have that quality which the French call *panache* — the defiant plume, the gay bravado, and the sense of destiny that makes you seem to hear trumpets when he enters.

This, I know, is what created the Saint's following, and what still holds them. And may they never get less nostalgic.

These rambling cogitations are likely to be read at a time when many of you will be facing holiday excursions to foreign parts—if not literally in another country, at least far enough from home to give you a certain feeling of strangeness. This, to the average traveller, translates to a personal insecurity which only extravagant largesse will buy him out of. In order to regain his confidence, he must be reassured that the natives are friendly, and the swiftest way to ensure this seems to be by making them lavish gifts. Not being equipped with bags of beads and bolts of calico, in the old pioneer tradition, he resorts to more portable and cosmopolitan trade goods, such as folding money.

The mundane word for this performance is "tipping", and by now it is far too deeply entrenched in the rituals of modern life for there to be much hope of getting rid of it. The expected palm is outthrust everywhere, demanding as of right the bonus that was once a mark of appreciation for service above and beyond the call of duty,

and levying on all and sundry the tribute which used to be the special bounty of princes and nobles.

(How often have you seen, in costume plays and pictures, the grand seigneur tossing a clinking purse to some obsequious lackey? And have you ever wondered what he uses for money after that? Or does he have a lot of purses in various pockets, each containing a carefully counted number of coins, so that he always knows exactly how much that negligent gesture is costing him? And does he buy purses by the dozen, wholesale, so that he doesn't have to look cheap by asking for them back?)

But worse than the ordinary craven submission to this routine extortion is the cowardice of over-tipping, by which too many venturers in unfamiliar places betray their insecurity, attempting by inordinate munificence to assure themselves of a civil welcome and a modicum of consideration.

The worst offenders in this respect are Americans, who have been so conditioned by the excesses which have become the norm at home that they have taught European flunkeys to expect ever-increasing standards of extravagance.

This led me to wonder, the other day, whether this symptom of a national psychology might not account for the peculiar United States' obsession with the idea of "foreign aid", which after all is only a form of tipping on a global scale, and the belief of one administration after another that the only way into international affection is through bribery and the only guarantee of the loyalty of an ally is to pay cash for it—a conviction which stubbornly persists in spite of the repeatedly proven readiness of multi-million-dollar recipients to yell "Yankee go home" and turn with open arms to the Russians, who are lavish with promises but never turn loose a ruble without a chain welded to it.

Since I am not billed as a political pundit, I must not press this too far, but must leave you to develop your own conclusions. However, as I withdraw, I must confess that I have stopped wishing that my father had been enterprising enough to drill a few oil wells. I just wish he had been a resort head waiter or the sultan of some "uncommitted country", and we could have milked the racket till the cows came home.

ugly duckling

by Lawrence Treat

I get as much fun out of life as most people, but I can go them one better. I get fun out of death, too.

Other people's.

At first it was only a harmless hobby, nothing against anybody in particular. There's just no malice in me. But I always got a kick out of putting tacks on the road and hoping a car would speed by and blow a tire. Or leaving banana peels on stairs and dreaming somebody would slip and crack a vertebra. Preferably an old lady, for the young are too likely to survive.

People like me instinctively. I'm tall and blue-eyed and look lazy, which I'm not. I have small features and curly blond hair, and a smile that knocks 'em dead. That's why I'm so good at my job, which is selling building materials. Somehow, people can't turn me down.

When I moved into the small house in the development, the party crowd accepted me right off. I drank with the best of

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As Jan Broberg pointed out in MORD FOR RO SKU LL, published in Sweden earlier this year, Lawrence Treat, author of some twenty novels and a frequent contributor to this magazine, is one of the foremost writers in the procedural school where, almost from the outset, the reader is allowed to follow each step of the police investigation — to the climax.

---

them, kissed most of the wives and didn't ask for anything more than they were willing to give. Until I saw Lynn.

Lynn Darsey. She's soft as cotton and sweet as butter, and she moves in glory. Her face is pure loveliness, her hair sweeps back in a wave of spun sugar, and her smile is a caress. Gregg, her husband, owned a garage, and the two of them billed and cooed at the parties, and drank highballs from the same glass. Which, for my money, was a tip-off. Nobody gets that lovely-dovey except for show. One of them was cheating.

Their house was back to back with mine, although it was separated by a deep gully overgrown with thickets. Both our houses were at the bottom of dead-end streets, with only the woods beyond. At night I could see into their lighted kitchen or into the bedroom upstairs, and I spent long hours watching the Darseys through field glasses. Once in a while I'd take out the small revolver I'd bought in Mexico, a few years ago. It's untraceable, and I'd take a bead on Gregg.

It would have been easy to kill him. All I had to do was sneak through the gully, fire the shot and sneak back. And who would suspect me?

Except that the police would have found the path, noticed the broken branches and drawn conclusions. Besides, I wasn't ready yet. When I was a kid, I might have taken a pot-shot just for the fun of it, but I wasn't interested merely in making Lynn a widow. The stage had to be set, the widow had to fall into my arms. Willingly.

I had a camera with a telescopic lens set up and trained on their bedroom window. The camera was hidden by my air conditioner, and wasn't there for mere curiosity, either. I wanted to know all I could about the Darseys, and to document it.

That's how I operate. With thoroughness. For instance, I never go see a customer cold. I find out all I can about him first, so that my approach is sound. And I applied the same kind of preparation to the problem of Gregg Darsey.

I had fifty ideas worked out in detail, all of them numbered and catalogued, and I'd use the right one when the right time came. Numbers thirty to forty, for instance, were accidents. Gregg could fall, he could drown, he could take poison by mistake. If we went to the lake and happened to go out in a boat together, I'd use plan Number Thirty-Three. Or again, I might want to blame his death on a robber or a homicidal maniac, according to plan Twenty-

Four. To set it up, I called the police a couple of times and complained of a mysterious marauder in the woods.

As for Lynn, I had no particular worries. Women are women, and they go for me. Appeal to their emotions, save them from some danger or take charge in a time of crisis, and they're grateful, they're yours. Sex, you can't beat it.

So I waited patiently and made friends with the Darseys. I cut a path through the gully and dropped in on them occasionally, for a few minutes or so. I could slip down the path without being seen, and it was the basis for quite a few of my plans.

I had a whole dossier on the Darseys. I knew they slept under a powder-blue, electric blanket and made coffee in a percolator, a flat tablespoon per cup. I had a chart of their favorite TV programs. I timed the arrival of old Mrs. Mauk, the cleaning women who came promptly every Monday and Friday at two, and always started her work downstairs.

I investigated the Darsey history and found out they'd lost a child about a year ago, which explained that lovey-dovey stuff. Secretly, each of them probably blamed the other one, remembering some piece of carelessness, something they should have done and hadn't. They felt guilty about blaming each other and so they made it up to themselves by that Romeo and Juliet act. But it wasn't natural. One good scrap would blow them apart and send them on their separate ways. I figured Darsey had a secretary waiting to lap him up, and I knew that Lynn had Jack Oliver and that I had to cut him out.

He taught in the local high school, and he was a teacher born and dedicated. A real, gone idealist. But he was too moral and too scared to do anything except follow Lynn around like a puppy, and blush whenever she looked at him.

So he was no rival, and I wasn't worried. When Gregg Darsey was killed, I was going to be right there, Lynn's hero and comforter. Me, Ray LePeer. All my plans made sure of that.

I watched the Darseys every night. They ate in the kitchen and then sat around after dinner, and I saw the split right from the start. I didn't know what it was all about, but I could see them arguing. Lynn would ask Gregg something, she'd lean forward and plead with him, but he'd just shake his head no. He'd sit there obstinately, hardly answering but getting angrier all the time, until finally he'd bang his fist on the table and snap out at her.

I could see her gasp, and she'd jump up from the table and run out of the room.

A minute later she'd turn on the light in her bedroom and throw herself down on the powder-blue, electric blanket and burst into tears. I'd take out my gun and aim it at Gregg and I'd pull the trigger until my fingers ached. I didn't keep the gun loaded, though, because I didn't want to do anything foolish. Nevertheless I'd press the trigger in a kind of blind rage and think of Gregg dead, dead, dead. When my spasm was over, I'd look at Lynn again. After a while she'd undress and turn out the light, and it wouldn't be lit again. Gregg would sleep downstairs.

I had to find out what it was all about, so a few days later, around noontime, I took the path through the gully and knocked on the kitchen door. Lynn opened it and invited me in.

"I ran out of sugar," I said. "I was wondering if I could borrow some."

"Of course," she said. And, with lunch there on the table, it was perfectly natural for her to ask me to stay and share it. I accepted.

After a few bites I put down my fork and studied her. She blushed self-consciously.

"You look bothered and unhappy," I said. "Anything wrong?"

Her smile was woe-begone. "Do I show it?" she said dispiritedly. Then, making a sudden decision to confide in me, she perked up and said rapidly, "I'll tell you. It's about my sister, Virginia. She's a librarian and she lost her job and she's lonesome and miserable and I want her to come live with us. And Gregg says no."

A sister? In a flash, I saw a whole new series of schemes, numbers fifty-one to sixty. The scapegoat, the sister who kills the brother-in-law whom she hates. And the neighbor who saves her from the death chamber, thus earning the love and gratitude of Lynn Darsey.

"Your own flesh and blood," I said, with feeling. "How can Gregg refuse? I don't understand."

"He doesn't like her," Lynn said. "She's not very attractive."

"All the more reason to help her," I said. Right then and there, I concocted a brand-new idea that depended on the ugly-duckling sister, and it was a masterpiece. The plan, that is. "How can Gregg be so hard-hearted?" I asked.

"I don't know," Lynn said, sighing. "But thanks for the support. You've helped a lot, you've made me sure. I simply *must* take care of my sister. I'm

so much luckier than she is, it's my duty to share."

"For a while, at least," I said cautiously. "Gregg can't object to a visit, can he? And after that, we'll see."

Thus, Virginia arrived.

She had a long nose with a pimple on it, and another pimple on her chin, starboard side. Her skin was coarse, her eyes were blinky and jaundiced, and she was losing her hair. She drank too much, and whenever she was drunk, she raised her skirts and showed her thin, crooked legs. Since she could walk, talk, read and write, she was technically a human being. To prove it, she paid an income tax, although I didn't know how much, nor care. Privately, I labeled her the witch.

She attacked me at the first party. "You're Ray LePeer," she said. "I bet all the women chase you. Are you married?"

"No," I said. "And I never will be."

"Oh, yes you will!" she said. "You're a great big wonderful hunk of man, and some little floozie will grab you — unless a more mature woman gets there first."

"Excuse me," I said. "I'm going back for another drink."

"I'll get it for you," she said, and she yanked the glass out of my hand and went flying to do my service.

I guess you could call it love at first sight, and nothing subtle about it, either. She hounded me. She smirked and leered and giggled, and she practically swooned inside her dry, flat bosom. I developed hives just from being in the same room with her, I got indigestion and lost weight and a rash started up every time she touched me. It itched so much that I went to the doctor about it. He told me I had an allergy.

And how!

Nevertheless I needed her. She was the scapegoat that fitted into a whole group of plans conceived with such balanced artistry that, just from thinking of them, my rash almost went away.

So I had to seem friendly, I couldn't risk making an enemy out of her. In fact, I saw a couple of ways of using that infatuation of hers, I couldn't do without it. All I needed was for Gregg to get sick and stay in bed some morning. Then I'd get Lynn and Virginia out of the way for a few hours, and — plan fourteen would go into effect.

The right circumstances developed with dramatic suddenness. Lynn, who was always working for the community, for the school, for the charity drives and local improvements and the election of somebody or other, knocked at my door late one

afternoon and asked me to sign a petition for a traffic light at the school crossing. She came inside while I signed, and we got talking.

She was aware that Virginia was making a nuisance of herself, and Lynn was sorry for me.

"You're being sweet to her," Lynn said. "I know you're not fond of her, but she's had so little happiness in life."

"If I'm sweet to her," I said, "it's for your sake. I advised you to invite her, so I'm partly responsible. And it's tough on you, too, isn't it?"

She nodded. "Gregg seems changed, sometimes I can't get to him. I hardly seem to know him."

"Rely on me," I said. "I'll speak to him."

"No — no — you mustn't. I'd feel awful."

"Then I won't do it," I said.

I could feel her go out to me, I could feel the flow of her emotions, and I wanted to put my arms around her and kiss her, but I didn't. I was saving that until she was a widow.

Then, innocently, not aware of what she was doing, she signed Gregg's death warrant. "He isn't feeling well," she remarked. "He has a touch of flu and I'm going to make him stay home tomorrow. It's my day at the co-op kindergarten, but Virginia will be home. She can take care of him."

"I'm sure of it," I said mildly. "She's so conscientious."

That night I oiled my gun, tested the action and inserted cartridges into the chambers for the first time. My days of dreaming were over. Tomorrow I would be a doer of death, and I'd live thereafter in the solid satisfaction of accomplishment.

At nine a.m. I saw Lynn drive the Darsey car out of the garage. I went to my camera and, through the finder, I could see Gregg lying there under the electric blanket. Next to him was a bottle of medicine, a thermos of water and a glass.

I went to the phone, picked it up and called the Darsey number. Virginia answered.

"Virginia," I said anxiously, "I have to see you."

"Come right over," she said. "Is anything wrong?"

"No, nothing. Except — it's hard to say over the phone, but I had a dream. I can't stop thinking about it. It was about you."

"I dreamt about you, too. Oh, Ray!"

"I'd like to spend the day with you and tell you about it."

"How wonderful! Come right over. Lynn's out and Gregg is in bed. He's sick."

"No. I'd rather meet you in town, it's important to me, I want to show you something.

Can you manage to get to the city?"

"You sound so mysterious."

"I have to do things my own way. I make sudden decisions, I see things that I never realized before. I want to take the day off and spend it with you."

"I'd love to," she said. "I guess I can leave Gregg, he's not so terribly sick."

"Good," I said. "Take the ten-twelve, and I'll meet you at Grand Central. I have a business call to make this morning, and then I'll be free."

"It sounds romantic," she said, lowering her voice.

"It is," I said. "And—" I hesitated as if I'd just thought of something. "Virginia, in case this business deal holds me up and I'm not at the station, make it for lunch. The Brass Rail at one o'clock. Okay?"

"Oh, Ray!' she said, and she hung up.

I watched her go upstairs with a tray of food and leave it with Gregg, speak to him and check his medicine, and then disappear. A little later, I saw her leave the house.

I crossed the gully.

It was simple enough. I shot Gregg, and I muffled the sound of the shot with a pillow. I hooded him with the electric blanket, turned it to high, and went home.

I didn't meet Virginia and had no intention of meeting her. I spent the morning visiting customers, made a nice sale, and had lunch with a real estate man. The gun, which was wrapped in a paper bag with some garbage, I dropped in somebody's rubbish pail. On the way home I stopped for gas, and stopped again at the corner store to buy a pack of cigarettes. There, I stuck around and talked about the weather until exactly two p.m. Then I headed for the Darsey house.

Mrs. Mauk's ancient sedan was parked in front of it, and I knocked on the door and walked in. She had just started to set the living room straight.

"Hello," I said. "Is Mr. Darsey in?"

"Him?" she said. "Isn't he at work?"

"Mrs. Darsey said he was sick. I thought I'd stop in and cheer him up."

"I haven't been upstairs," she said, and started wiping the table with her dust cloth.

I climbed the stairs, went into the bathroom and tore off a fistful of paper and slipped out of my shoes. I tiptoed out, slammed the door noisily and, still on tiptoe, I entered the bedroom.

It took me exactly a minute and a half to disconnect the electric blanket, fold it and shove it under the spare bedding at

the back of the linen closet, substitute another blanket and, with the wad of paper, smudge the blood on the corpse so that the clotted film was broken. I entered the bathroom quietly, flushed the paper down the toilet, put on my shoes and stepped out. I waited fifteen seconds by my watch before I came staggering down the stairs.

"Mrs. Mauk!" I exclaimed. "Something terrible — Mr. Darsey — he's been killed!"

Her mouth dropped open, but she found nothing adequate to say. She kept gaping at me while I stumbled over to the phone and notified the police.

Officer Henley, whom everybody knows as Sam, arrived within five minutes. I was sitting on the couch, smoking furiously and looking upset.

"He's upstairs," I blurted out. "Go see, but — I'd rather not look again."

It was Sam's first murder case, and the local police are not set up to take care of homicides. Sam called the state troopers and asked me a few obvious questions while he waited for them, but he was as shaken up as I was.

The trooper came within ten minutes, and they took charge. Some brisk questions, a call to the coroner and to the plain clothes detail from the state Criminal Investigation Department. They were the ones who handled homicides, and they knew their business.

They fastened on me, as I expected, and got the background of the Darsey family. The police were on general questions when the coroner came downstairs. He'd found the body still warm and the blood barely clotted, and he'd made the usual tests for the precise body temperature. As a result, he pinned down the time of death as between one and two p.m., and I had an impulse to thank him for a job well done. Because, once the timing was settled, I was home free.

Nevertheless the C.I.D. men were rough. They suspected me, they practically smelt me out. The bachelor next door, the attractive wife, the secret path — the pattern was familiar to them. They sensed that I was in love with Lynn and wanted Gregg out of the way, and they hated to give up a nice, obvious theory.

But they respected facts, and the facts were that Gregg had been killed between one and two. No getting around that. So they tackled my story with a vengeance and checked every detail. Naturally they couldn't break my alibi.

I didn't mention my conversation with Virginia, and I intended to deny it had ever taken place. A weak point? I didn't think so, because everybody knew how she'd been chasing

me, and everybody would agree that her story was pure fantasy, neurotic almost to the point of hallucination. Besides, the truth would sound even stranger than the lie, might not be believed and would require a whole set of awkward explanations.

I rested on my alibi. I'd left my house a little after nine-thirty a.m. and spent the morning with customers. At one-thirty, I'd been twenty miles away. I'd stopped for gas, stopped at the corner store and arrived at the Darseys after Mrs. Mauk. She had keen ears and had heard me go up to the bathroom. That was the only time I could have killed Gregg, but no shot had been heard. I had no gun and none was found. By the time Lynn came home, the C.I.D. men were through with me.

She arrived a little after three. She saw the police cars parked outside the house, and she rushed in hysterically, to stop in the center of the room and ask more with her eyes and the quiver of her lips than with any actual words.

I told her. My heart went out to her, and I began crying with her. I'm sensitive that way, I couldn't help myself. I put my arm around her and sat her down on the couch, and she buried her head against my shoulder and wept uncontrollably. The police judged it better that she not go upstairs. Therefore she knew nothing about the substituted blanket.

Lynn was questioned briefly. She'd been in school all day, in the presence of dozens of people, and she had no idea who might have killed her husband. She expressed surprise that Virginia wasn't here and she couldn't imagine where Virginia had gone, or why. Which made Virginia the obvious suspect.

The police told me to take Lynn to my house, call a doctor and see that she got some rest. I obeyed willingly. I was Johnny-on-the-spot, I was the helping hand and the rock of Gibraltar. Lynn turned to me for support, and I gave it.

I wasn't there when Virginia showed up and I wasn't there while she was being questioned. To my surprise, I found out that she hadn't mentioned my phone call or the tryst. She was either too smart to expect the police to believe her, or else too ashamed to admit being stood up. She merely said that Gregg had been feeling better, hadn't needed her, and she'd decided to go shopping in town. And she could prove she'd done just that.

Artistically, I should have framed her for the murder, but I had to play it safe and look out for myself, first. And, as I said before, there's just no malice in me. So I was content with a

good job well done. After all, you can't have everything, and I'd fooled the police nicely.

Naturally, they made a thorough search of the Darsey house, but why would they look for another blanket? They weren't clairvoyant, they couldn't read my mind. So the blanket stayed in its closet, folded up with the sheets and towels and pillow slips and the extra quilts. The police concentrated their search on the woods, and combed the terrain for signs of a tramp or a robber. They drew blank.

That night, everybody in the development double-locked their doors and bolted their windows. A killer was on the loose, he might still be in the neighborhood, and nobody was taking chances.

I slept beautifully, with no worries. I took my camera away from the window and I burnt all the papers on which I'd written down my plans. The world is the loser, but I had my own safety to think of.

I didn't see Virginia until the following evening. Around eight o'clock there was a knock on my door. I opened it, and she stood there leering, with that witch's look in her eyes.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "Aren't you afraid to be out alone?"

"Ray, you say the cutest things! Of course I'm not afraid. Aren't you going to invite me in?"

I stood aside and let her walk past me. I closed the door slowly, backed up against it and stared. "Well?" I said.

"I wanted to tell you it wasn't nice of you, fooling a girl the way you fooled me yesterday."

I breathed a sigh of relief, and I tried to look puzzled. "How did I do that?" I asked.

"The phone call."

"What phone call?" I said.

She smoothed her skirts, settled back in the couch and made herself comfortable. "I knew you'd forget all about it," she said. "That's why I didn't mention it to the police. And I couldn't believe it in the first place. I was sure you were trying to trick me, because love doesn't come suddenly like that. Not from a dream."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said, frowning.

"Ray, I didn't go to New York until a much later train. Because when I went out yesterday morning I came straight to your house, I wanted to find out what you really had in mind. But you weren't in, so I went upstairs. I saw you from the window, Ray. I saw everything."

I felt sick and my knees went shaky, and I crossed the room to sit down. Virginia patted the couch and said, "Here, Ray. Sit here."

I flopped down obediently. "You saw everything?"

She nodded. "I even took pictures with that camera of yours." She opened her pocketbook and showed me some prints. "Look."

She would have made a fine, professional photographer.

"Look," she said again, and her long, bony finger reached out and pointed. It brushed the back of my hand and I knew I'd have that rash again, I'd never get rid of it.

"See that one?" she said. 'It even shows the clock. Nine thirty-five. And the electric blanket is so clear, you can even see the wiring. Ray, I think you're so clever."

I wet my lips, but in my despondency and defeat, I saw a ray of hope. Plan Thirty-Seven, the accident in the gully — of course! I'd see her home, I'd taken her down that path. Chancy under the circumstances, but there are times when the risk has to be taken and you have to be bold. I could almost feel the rash begin to disappear.

"Aren't you afraid to tell me this?" I said.

"No. Ray, I'm happy. Because we're going to be married and you'll always be good to me."

"Why?"

"The pictures, silly. I had them printed while I was in the city, and the negatives are in a vault and my lawyer is the only person who has the keys. You won't even know in which bank. But he has instructions to open the vault in case anything happens to me, and then he'll find the negatives, with a letter telling everything. Ray, don't you hope I live a long, long time? And don't you always want to make me happy?"

I didn't answer.

I stayed away from Lynn, because Virginia told me to. That's why Lynn began to see more and more of Jack Oliver. With the result that, at the end of the school term, they married and moved away to another community.

Virginia and I live in my house. We sleep under a powder-blue, electric blanket that has a small stain on it, and we look into the windows of what used to be the Darsey house, and reminisce. As Virginia often says, there's so much to remember.

I've thought up a dozen ways to get rid of her, and some of them are beautifully ingenious. But no matter how ingenious they are, Virginia has protected herself. I don't know where the negatives and the letter are, I don't even know the name of her lawyer. If I kill her, I'm bound to be caught.

Nevertheless, some day I'll do it. I can't help myself.

I have to.

you are a spy

by Victor Canning

JUST after the war I decided to write a novel with a Yugoslav background. In order to get my details and local colour right I had to go to the country.

Those were the days when Yugoslavia was still very closely linked with Russia and visitors were not encouraged.

After some trouble I got a visa. From Rijeka — once Fiume — at the head of the Adriatic I took a small coastal steamer and started a leisurely journey through the islands and down the coast.

It was a wonderful trip, scenically, but hard and uncomfortable. I found a great deal of reserve and suspicion among the Yugoslavs against Western visitors. Russia's star was high.

After a couple of days' travelling I stopped off at one of the islands, found a small hotel in its one town, and decided to look around until the next boat arrived. I knew also that in a small chapel in the island there was a magnificent carved wooden fig-

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Major Victor Canning, one of England's foremost writers of adventure and suspense novels, is the author of THE LIMBO LINE (reviewed in this magazine last month), BLACK FLAMINGO, THE MAN FROM "THE TURKISH "SLAVE", THE GOLDEN SALAMANDER, THE DRAGON TREE, etc. etc.

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News and Feature Services

ure of Christ Crucified done by the famous Yugoslav sculptor Mestrovic — who had left the country and gone to America.

My first morning on the island I walked down to the harbour and hired an old man with a rowing boat to take me along the coast to the chapel.

He was an old man of about 70 — dressed in a faded blue shirt and patched trousers—with a creased, weather-beaten face and a boyish twinkle still in his eyes. He spoke no English, but we managed with bad Italian.

Once we were free of the harbour and rowing down the coast he became very talkative and told me exactly what he thought of the Communist regime in the country.

He landed me on a little beach not far from the chapel and, seeing that I had a camera with me, asked me to take a couple of photographs of himself.

He had a much younger brother who was a waiter in a restaurant in London. Would I, when I got back, give the photographs to his brother and tell him that he was well? All letters were censored and I could tell his brother far more than he dared to write.

I took a couple of photographs and said I would see his brother. The old man then rowed away because I had decided to make my own way back along the coast to the town.

I found the chapel and Mestrovic's carving—a lovely piece of work — and then I started to walk back.

Somewhere along the way I got lost in an oak forest. I came out on the edge of a long scarp that sloped inland.

Below me was a magnificent white villa surrounded by tall, dark cypresses, and with a small lake to one side of it.

I went closer and saw that there were men working on the villa, repainting it and repairing the roof. I liked the look of the place so much that I took a couple of photographs of it.

As I turned away a couple of tough-looking soldiers with carbines unslung stepped out of some bushes and grabbed me by the arms.

They shouted and shook their heads at me, but I didn't understand a word they were saying. They kept a firm grip on me and began to take me down to the villa. There was nothing I could do so I went along.

Just inside the main gate of the villa there was a low, rather shabby bungalow. Loafing about outside were three or four Yugoslav soldiers, all dressed in rough khaki shirts and denim trousers.

My guards hauled me into the main room of the bungalow and left me there. There was a table, untidy with papers, a couple of

wooden chairs, a filing cabinet with a flask of wine on it and a piece of dark looking sausage, and over the fireplace a photograph of Marshal Tito.

After a few minutes an officer came into the room. Except for the badges of rank on his shirt and a belt with a pistol holster he was dressed as roughly as his men.

He was a tall, dark, good-looking man, but with a firm humourless mouth.

He said: "I speak English. I am captain here. It is to hand over camera, passport, and empty pockets, please."

His English, I soon found, was shocking and I shall not attempt to reproduce it with its full obscurity. I handed my things over, including my wallet and my diary.

He sat down and began to go through them. Through the window I could see his men outside.

"Why," he said after a while, "of this villa you take photographs?"

"Because I liked the look of it."

He smiled disbelievingly. "Is notice and barbed wire not to come here."

I remembered then that in the wood somewhere I had climbed over barbed wire, but I hadn't seen any notice.

"I didn't see any notice."

"You see wire?"

"Yes."

"Wire says keep away." He called through the window to one of his men. When he came in he handed him my camera and the man went out with it. A few second later I heard a car start up.

The captain looked at me and said: "Here you must wait for a time. This villa is summer house of Marshal Tito. You are a spy."

"I'm not a spy—I'm just a tourist."

"Of course spies like tourists always look." He toyed with a spare roll of film which I had taken from my pocket. "I have my duty."

He began to look through my diary and I suddenly saw him stiffen.

"What is this?" He pointed to the note I had made in my diary of the old man's brother's address in London. I'd put the old man's name down, too.

I didn't care a damn about the villa business, but I didn't want to get the old man in trouble.

I said: "He's the boatman who rowed me out here. He told me he had a brother in London and I said I would look him up some time and give him his greetings. Nothing wrong in that."

"No? And also he says to you?"

"Nothing. We just chatted about fishing."

"You are sure? He says nothing about this country? I know this man. He talks bad things about Yugoslavia."

"Not to me. We just talked about fishing and I took a photograph of him to give to his brother. He is a good man. You have only to see his face to tell that."

The captain smiled grimly. "I know his face."

Well, he kept me there nearly four hours. Most of the time I was on my own. I could see that taking a photograph of Tito's villa could look very bad—particularly in a country jumpy with suspicions about the West still.

Every now and then a soldier came and looked through the window at me. Finally I heard the car return and a little later the captain came in and spread out on the table the photographs which had been developed and printed from my film.

There they were, some shots taken on the boat, two of the old man, and two of the villa.

He sat looking at them for a long time, then he looked up at me and said quietly: "You take very good shots. Very good. Professional?"

I could see the photographs on the table in front of him and they weren't bad. But it must have been luck. I'm the world's worst with a camera.

"I'm not professional," I said.

He said nothing, but he picked up the villa photographs and tore them into small pieces. Dropping them into the waste-paper basket, he said: "For taking photographs of the villa there is heavy punishment. Thank you to wait here."

He got up and went outside and I could hear him shouting orders to his men. They moved off. A little later, through the window, I saw them coming back.

I didn't like what I saw. They had all changed into clean uniforms and began to form up before the bungalow with their carbines across their shoulders.

A corporal bullied them into line, and then stood them at ease.

At this moment the captain came back into the room. There was a change in him, too. He'd put on a smart tunic, riding breeches, and a peaked cap tilted at a jaunty angle.

He looked at me across the table and he said firmly: "Now come, please, for the shooting."

"What the devil are you talking about?" I cried.

"For the shooting. Come."

"But you can't do that," I said. "Not without a trial, not for shooting. You will shoot me without——"

"No argument. Please to come

in front of my men and then I will give you address of English nurse I meet when I am partisan. You will give her the photographs. Still in my heart I have softness for her. Please to come." He smiled amiably.

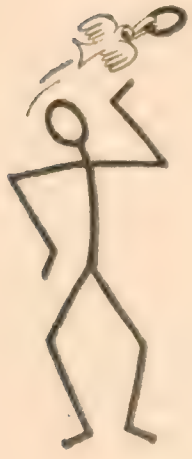
So I went out into the sunlight and took photographs of him and his men, and afterwards he drove me back into the town.

On the way he said: "This shooting is not a favour one can ask of any visitor. But you are a man who knows how to say nothing. The old man, the fisherman, you know is my uncle."

He shook his head. "I know how he talks. One day there will be trouble with him. He should be like me and keep it here—" he tapped his breast.

It's a pity, but the photographs were no good. Maybe my hands were shaking too much. So, I never got in touch with the nurse.

NEXT MONTH —



A LINK STILL MISSING
by G. B. STERN

PHILOSOPHY AND THE DUTCHMAN
by WILLIAM O'FARRELL

THE PASTRY-COOK OF MADRIGAL
by RAFAEL SABATINI

DEATH IN MY DREAMS
by LAURENCE MEYNELL

THE DIAMOND NOOSE
by PHILIP KETCHUM

THE MAN WHO LOOKED AT FISH
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

— in the next issue of **THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE**

profile of a bloodhound

by Stuart Palmer

BLOODHOUND really wasn't the right name for him, though there are points of similarity. That useful breed of man-hunting dog, which has somewhat passed out of the picture since fleeing culprits have taken to the omnipresent automobile, never showed a trace of malice or vindictiveness. The bloodhound is possessed of a one-track mind—asking only "Where did the person who smells in this unique manner go to, and by what route did he travel?" When bloodhounds have been used in tracking a fugitive from justice, very often at the end of the chase the sheriff's posse would find the bloodhound romping around the trapped man and trying to lick his face.

Like the bloodhound, (Edward) Oscar Heinrich, father of modern criminal investigation, was concerned only with facts. In a fairly large percentage of his more than a thousand major criminal cases, he was able to use his scientific approach to free a suspect rather than to pin a

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Stuart Palmer — writer, editor, newspaperman — will undoubtedly go down in history as the author of the Hildegarde Withers stories, several of which have appeared in this magazine. His and Craig Rice's PEOPLE VS. WITHERS & MALONE *(1963, S&S), was reviewed here earlier this year.*

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crime upon him. Heinrich never showed any tendency to be "prosecution-minded", and while his investigations sent many a culprit to the death-chamber or to the living death of a cell at Folsom or San Quentin, there are many, many others who walk free today because a stubborn chemist in a little laboratory at the University of California at Berkeley pioneered new methods in analyzing the secrets locked in a grain of sand, the petal of a flower, a leaden bullet, a drop of dried blood, or the scrawl of a pen on paper. True, even in the so-called Roaring Twenties, when the quiet little professor of chemistry began to come into public notice because of his appearance on the witness stand in certain notable trials, there were in existence certain experts in various fields who sometimes were available to police or to district attorneys. But never had there been a qualified man who understood and could apply the laws of chemistry, physics, ballistics, botany, geology, biology (*plus* psychology) to a special problem.

The record shows that Heinrich did it more than a thousand times, without ever being really wrong even once!

Oscar Heinrich was sometimes called, in the press, "The Wizard of Berkeley"—which irked him a little, because to him there was no magic or wizardry in his coldly scientific approach. Neither was this retiring genius pleased when newspaper reporters dubbed him "the real-life Sherlock Holmes". "*Not* Sherlock Holmes,"* he once said testily. "Holmes acted on hunches, and hunches play no part in my crime laboratory. Hunches and calculating science are incongruous to each other!"

Much of Oscar Heinrich's pioneering is taken for granted now. Even before his death, certain of his techniques had been adopted by the FBI and by criminal investigation departments in all our large cities—and even in Europe!

Heinrich, in his quiet and unassuming way, made sense of what up until his time had been mostly a confused muddle. After

*Which only proves that Heinrich had never read "the Canon", the Sherlock Holmes stories and novels dear to millions and sacred to The Baker Street Irregulars. Conan Doyle presented Holmes as the first truly scientific, laboratory detective, a man years ahead of his time and breaking, in the guise of fiction, much of the ice that Heinrich had to break in real life, three or four decades later. But Heinrich never read for pleasure.

a crime had been committed, the police almost invariably arrested the most-likely suspect, being interested only in means and motive. "Circumstantial evidence" was in low repute at that time (perhaps partly due to the tendency of authors and playwrights and movie script writers to ridicule it, for dramatic purposes or out of pure ignorance) and "direct evidence"—usually the testimony of bystanders or interested persons—was preferred. Police had a way then of settling upon a theory, and then discarded or ignored everything that didn't seem to fit into that theory!

The situation is a little like that of Henrik Hudson and other early explorers, who were determined to find the Northwest Passage to India by sailing up the Hudson River!

Heinrich managed to change all that, to a very great degree. He became the founder of the University of California Department of Criminology and also of what was really to be a whole new "school" of crime investigation on modern, scientific lines, eventually to become nation-wide in scope. The Department at Berkeley, which took root and budded under his hand, was later to flower under the great August Vollmer and later under Orlando W. Wilson. Many of "Wilson's lieutenants" — graduate students who have trained at Berkeley—have gone out to take over the police departments of some of our nation's largest and most crime-ridden cities, and whip them back into shape on modern, scientific lines.

But what of this man, Oscar Heinrich himself? His was a typical Horatio Alger story in real life. Born April 20th, 1881, in the village of Clintonville, Wisconsin, he had an uphill row to hoe almost from the start. As a small boy, the only spending money he ever saw was what he got from collecting empty bottles, which he sold back to the drug-store, or to the saloon or soft-drink parlor, for a penny apiece. When he was eight years old, his parents — both German immigrants — moved west to try their fortunes in Tacoma, Washington. Oscar was only twelve when the great depression of 1893 came along. His father's little business failed like thousands of others, and the boy had to quit school to take a full-time job as cash-boy in a neighborhood drug-store. For the past two years he had been delivering daily newspapers, climbing out of bed at 3:30 in the morning to follow his route through the roughest part of town, including the red-light district. In a way it had been a rather liberal education, of a sort. The drug-store was a step ahead,

though he was sad about not being able to go on to high school with the rest of his class. Nothing daunted, he set out familiarizing himself with the pharmacy, the myriads of bottles and their cryptic labels, the prescription files, and the patent medicines. It was almost inevitable that with his quick mind he should take up the study of pharmacy from textbooks, studying long hours at home every evening after the store was closed. At eighteen, without ever having attended more than a few months of high school or even seen the doors of a college of pharmacy, he skinned through the state examinations and became a full-fledged, licensed pharmacist!

Which of course was half-way on the road to becoming a genuine chemist. But the job in the drug-store also taught him applied psychology, as he admitted years later. He saw mankind in sickness and in terror and in shame, he saw the local prohibitionist and pillar of the church furtively purchasing "tonics" with 25% grain alcohol plus cloves for the breath, he saw schoolboys and sometimes schoolgirls buying rubber contraceptives, he saw shamed and frightened girls asking for ergot compounds or other supposed abortifacients. . . .

"I learned what people think and do in secret," he once said.

It became Oscar Heinrich's dream to go on to college. Even in his late teens, this young man had an uncanny ability to get what he wanted. It was the time of the Russo-Japanese war, with the stock markets and the produce markets fluctuating like crazy. Moved by an inspiration which came from he knew not where, he calmly invested (or rather, gambled) his meager savings in buying wheat on margin, pyramiding and parlaying his profits until in a few months he had made enough money to pay his way through at least a year of college and still have enough to provide for his mother (now a widow) and his two sisters! This sudden and perhaps unearned success in speculation might have gone to the head of any other youth, but Heinrich sold out at the right time, got out of the market, and never again in his entire life gambled on anything!

Now young Heinrich set out for the University of California at Berkeley, the school of his choice, because no lesser place would do. Where he found, upon his arrival, that without a high school diploma, without even a full year of high school, he was completely ineligible! Any other young man would have given up in despair. But Heinrich kept coming back.

When the sympathetic registrar learned that this obviously exceptional youth had but $15 in his pockets, which was obviously not even enough for return fare to Tacoma, the man stretched a point and admitted him as "a special student in chemistry", through an extremely loose interpretation of the rules. (Heinrich told the literal truth about having only $15—his funds were safe with mother, back home).

It has been said somewhere that the whole world makes way for the man who really knows where he is going. Certainly this was true in Heinrich's case. Within two years, on the basis of his exceptional work in chemistry and the other sciences, he was given regular status and full credits, and in 1908 was graduated with his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry.

A photograph of Heinrich taken at the time shows him as a square-headed, medium-tall young man, with a shock of brown hair, a straight and somewhat pointed nose, wearing a thoughtful expression, a mail-order suit, and a high, stiff collar. He was not a smiling man, then or later.

Oscar planned to return to Tacoma, but first there was the matter of marrying one Marion Allen, a little girl from Salt Lake City of more or less Mormon ancestry—it was a quiet wedding and a quietly happy marriage which was to last until Heinrich's death, 45 years later. He immediately managed to get a job with the city of Tacoma, as chemist and sanitary engineer—which meant that he dealt mostly with problems of drinking water and of sewage disposal! At the same time, as official city chemist, he set up a little laboratory — mostly with his own funds — and encouraged the police and the coroner's office to consult with him on their more difficult criminological problems. It was typical of the directness of his entire life—Heinrich moved in almost a straight line right where he wanted to go, and right where his latent talents were needed most.

It was now that he had his first real opportunity to display his abilities and to prove his theories. There had been a supposed suicide in town, with a lonely widow found dead in her own kitchen, an empty revolver on the floor near her hand. According to the investigating authorities, there was no question whatever but that the woman had taken her own life, and so—after cursory inspection — the coroner's jury found. There was a hole in the wall back of the stove, presumably made by a bullet which had passed through the body. It all fitted very neatly.

But right then young Hein-

rich stuck out his neck. He demanded to see the house of death (which unfortunately for him had been cleaned up by well-meaning neighbors) and almost at once he found that the hole in the wall, supposedly made by the bullet, was filled with embedded dust, an accumulation of months. That proved it could not possibly have been made at the time of death. Nor did probing show anything at all embedded there *except* dust. Heinrich then went over the kitchen, inch by inch, and finally came upon a tiny fragment of lead embedded in one wall. From the position of the slug (part of the original bullet) he figured out by geometry the angle the bullet must have followed as it left the gun; he figured out where the shooter had stood, using a piece of string to indicate the trajectory. Heinrich easily proved that the shot had been fired some considerable distance from where the victim had been struck. He also found some washed-out bloodstains on floor and wall, quite invisible to the naked eye, which indicated the movements of the victim after the shot. It was murder — and well-concealed.

The investigation was immediately reopened, and an arrest of one of the dead woman's boy-friends was made. For the first time Oscar Heinrich, a boy in his early twenties, appeared in court as an expert witness. It is on record that even at this early stage in his career he demonstrated the rare faculty of giving scientific evidence precisely and simply, showing his purely objective viewpoint. "These things are so, because. . . ." he would say. And, "The criminal signs his name to every crime he commits!"

But only very occasionally in quiet Tacoma did there come up a case requiring Heinrich's budding talents in scientific criminal investigation, the field which he had now decided to make his own. He had as yet had almost no publicity, but his fame was beginning to spread, particularly in official circles. He was the man to see, people said, when there was a problem about the "medicine" that helped carry off Uncle so-and-so, or about which bullet came from which gun, and particularly when there was the question of a forged document or the signature on a will. Starting off with the viewpoint of the analytical chemist and making a deep study of the inks involved, Heinrich went deeply into handwriting identification, a branch of criminology then in its very infancy. It was now that Heinrich took to using the camera (with which he soon became an expert) to take on-the-scene photos or closeups or

micro-photos, and then making mammoth enlargements. One of his innovations was that of "blowing-up" individual letters of typescript or handwriting as much as a hundred or more times, and of super-imposing one picture on another to show similarity so that even a jury of laymen could see and understand the facts.

In 1916 there came a call from the city of Alameda (a suburb of San Francisco) where Heinrich was to take over the job of reorganizing the police force, which was still operating with the techniques of the last century. Here he concentrated mostly on records and identification, on indexes and fingerprint files and other paperwork. And here he blazed new trails, eliminating miles of red tape and making sense out of what had been utter confusion. At the same time he continued graduate work at his own university across the bay, going on into advanced chemistry and physics, and working at home on handwriting identication and analysis and also on building up a file of typewriter type-faces on every machine then being manufactured or which had ever been manufactured, here or anywhere in the world! The man seems to have had an uncanny, unerring foreknowledge of what he would someday need to know!

His career (about which he had never had the slightest doubt from the very beginning) was now well launched. And it was at this time, shortly before the entry of the United States into World War I, that he really stepped into the big time. It was an open secret by now in international intelligence circles that a world-wide plot was in existence, originating among the Kaiser's top military leaders in Berlin, to strike at the British Empire at the point of the crucial Suez Canal, cutting off its life-line. This was what later became known as the Hindu Ghar affair, with key centers in Constantinople, Delhi, Khartoum, Hong Kong *and* San Francsico. Nationalist leaders hostile to the Empire were reportedly involved, over two continents and reaching into a third. Obviously the neutrality of the United States was being threatened.

The names of the major figures were by this time known, or at least suspected, by British M-1 and by the US Secret Service. But legal evidence there was none. All communications between the parties concerned were written in obscure dialects, for which no dictionaries existed. Code and cypher experts had found them untranslatable.

Oscar Heinrich was now a captain in a U.S. Army Engineer corps, concerned mostly with

logistics, but someone in official circles had heard of his reputation. He was handed the correspondence, and asked if he could make anything of it. At the same time he was offered the help of various linguistic experts and professors.

He shook his head. The only possible way for him to approach the problem, he said, was to start at the beginning and learn the languages, then the dialects. He struggled for months, with the occasional help of tutors, and eventually he took the letters into his laboratory and broke them down! He not only managed to make a clear translation of every one, but he pinned each letter down as to the personal characteristics of the sender—and in some cases even as to the *physical characteristics* of the man who had done the writing! Some of the correspondence was typed, most of it was written by hand. But he had all the letters pegged. And he proved himself a linguist, an ink analyst, and a typewriter mechanical engineer, in addition to his other professional attributes.

Heinrich made thousands of photographs of the letters, and finally brought them into a Federal court, where he was the star witness in a memorable trial. Here he used a projector, and cast photographs of individual words and letter-characters upon a large screen for the jury to see. The case would have made a Famous Trials volume in itself, but it is enough to point out that of the 32 defendants (among them Herr Bopp, German Consul General in San Francisco, Wilhelm von Brincken, a military attache, Eckhardt von Schact, vice-consul, and dozens more) only one minor figure was acquitted.

The only real evidence against any of the accused was Heinrich's testimony as to who wrote what and to whom!

It would be no exaggeration to say that without Heinrich's services the plot — extending from Berlin to Calcutta, Bangkok, Batavia, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. — would have probably come off, Britain might well have been knocked out of the war, and it all could have ended in a complete victory for the Kaiser and his war-lords! Heinrich himself always considered the Hindu Ghar case one of his greatest successes, though the entire story has never been told even to this day.

With the war over, and after a brief period as city manager of Boulder, Colorado — where he quietly and scientifically reorganized the bankrupt town — there was a new and inevitable tide in the affairs of Oscar Heinrich. Theodore Kytka, the fa-

mous San Francisco handwriting expert, was dead. His passing left a tremendous gap.

The only possible successor was Heinrich. He not only could do everything Kytka had done with questioned documents, but he was now a walking encyclopedia of criminology and forensic chemistry.

So Oscar Heinrich came back to his beloved Berkeley, where he was to remain for the rest of his busy life. He divided his time between a small private office in San Francisco and a chair at the University of California, as Professor of Chemistry. Within a short time his classes were filled not only with young men anxious to sit at the feet of the great criminologist, but with detectives, policemen, and even chiefs of police from all over the USA. Somehow the quiet, studious man—devoted all his life to high starched collars and a spotless white smock in his laboratories, his only relaxation being the growing of strawberries in his back yard—managed to keep up his lecture schedule and at the same time handle hundreds of criminal problems, often all at the same time. It was strictly a one-man show—it would not be until later, under August Vollmer, that the Department of Criminology would become complex, with lecturers on all sorts of subject such as questioned documents, handwriting identification, ballistics, criminal psychology, etc. Heinrich in his day was ten lecturers in one.

He now was getting all the hard cases, the puzzling ones. He gained nation-wide fame when he ran up against what was to become later known as the D'Autremont case. That began when a Southern Pacific train (No. 13!) was held up at the mouth of a tunnel in the lonely Siskiyou mountains of southern Oregon (in Tunnel 13!) by two masked bandits. The date was October 11th, 1923. The engineer, brakeman and fireman were shot, and in an abortive attempt to blow open the mail car, presumably containing a money shipment, the mail-clerk burned to death.

The two robbers got no loot, but made their escape leaving nothing behind but a very dirty pair of overalls. Then began one of the greatest manhunts of the decade. Police decided that there were traces of machine oil on the overalls, and made a descent upon all the machine shops and garages in Oregon and northern California. They finally found a man who seemed to fit the vague descriptions they had of one of the bandits—a mechanic who could not account for his absence from work at the time of the holdup, and had other black

marks against him.

But he clammed up, refusing to talk or name any accomplices or even to admit anything. And the overalls were forwarded, somewhat belatedly, to Oscar Heinrich, the police hoping that he could perform some sort of a miracle and give them evidence that would pin the crime on their pet suspect.

They were to have a rude awakening. "Let him go," said Heinrich. "Wrong man." He had found that the "grease" on the overalls was really pitch, from lumber, that the few grains of dust in the pockets of the overalls were really tiny wood chips, from trees growing in northern Oregon. Heinrich went on, to explain that the man they really wanted was white, between 21 and 25 years of age, not over five-feet-ten, weight about 165, with medium brown hair, light brown eyebrows, small hands and feet, and had rather fastidious personal habits. He was definitely left-handed, and had lived and worked in the Pacific Northwest.

His explanation of how he made these findings, while fascinating, is somewhat too lengthy for these pages. But he found wood chips, the needles of Douglas firs, and fingernail clippings (all microscopic) in the pockets, hair caught on a button—and he had made many deductions from the wear and tear on the overalls themselves.

The suspect was freed—after weeks of hard questioning in jail — and the search went on. But Heinrich wasn't through. In the watchpocket of the overalls he found a tiny crumpled ball which — when he had worked over it for days—proved to be a bit of tissue paper. It was worn to shreds, it was completely illegible—but Heinrich managed it, using certain chemical techniques and photographic methods he had invented. Finally he found that it was the receipt for a money-order for $50 made out to a Paul D'Autremont, Eugene, Oregon, and bought by Roy D'Autremont from somewhere in New Mexico.

It was the beginning of the break in the case. Police found an old man named D'Autremont who lived in Eugene, and who was known to have three sons. And what amazed the police was that the description given by Heinrich as to the man who had worn the overalls fitted Roy D'Autremont, one of the sons, down to the last detail!

However, all three of the D'Autremont boys had been missing since approximately the time of the train robbery. The search went on, while Heinrich forgot all about the case and went on to his other work. It was not until three years later

that the brothers were caught, through an Army sergeant recognizing the face on a Wanted poster as that of a former private he had know back in the Philippines. The three men saved their lives by pleading guilty and accepting life sentences, but the case was one of Heinrich's greatest successes.

"The smaller the detail, the more likely it is that the criminal has overlooked it," he said often. Another of his pet saying was this: "The criminal labels every crime he commits!"

Heinrich always insisted that crime analysis must be an orderly procedure, that the investigator must ask himself these questions: What precisely did happen? Precisely *when* did it happen? Where exactly did it happen? Why did it happen? (and only last) Who did it?

It was also Heinrich's firm belief that, given a well-used book, he could after a close study of it describe in detail the man who had owned it. This he proved again and again, particularly in the Schwartz case, Berkeley 1925—where the markings on the burned fragment of a religious tract helped him establish the identity of a murder victim. Here he uncovered one of the cleverest insurance frauds of the century, and prevented a colossal miscarriage of justice.

He demonstrated his encyclopedic knowledge of California geology in the Bessie Ferguson case, working from only a few grains of sand, though it was one of the few cases where his work did not result in an arrest —the guilty man, experts say, had died a natural death while the investigation was going on. Heinrich solved the mystery of the murders of Henry Sweet and lovely Carmen Wagner, a couple who had gone deer-hunting and fallen in with two half-breed Indians, Jack Ryan and his brother Walter. Here Heinrich, the laboratory recluse, had to outsmart two wily woodsmen at their own game.

There was the Selaya mystery in Fresno — murder and an attempted frame of an innocent man. Heinrich straightened it all out. There was the kidnapping of Father Patrick Heslin in Colma, south of San Francisco, when Heinrich broke the mystery and secured a conviction of murder on the writer of a ransom note—the note, Heinrich saw, had been printed by a *baker* since the man used cake-bakers' lettering with concave uprights of the "A" and "H", and a square bottom of "U".

And so on and so on, for more than a thousand successful cases!

Oscar Heinrich was incredible, and he was also just about infallible. In only a very few courtrooms did his testimony

fail to convince the juries, and transcripts of some of the major trials in which he appeared are still studied by prosecutors who want to prepare expert witnesses for the ordeals of cross-examination by sniping defense attorneys.

Heinrich was an explorer of uncharted trails, but he was also a man who could correlate and solidify and apply the discoveries of scientists and technicians in half a hundred fields and put them to practical use—in that he was somewhat akin to Thomas Edison. His "first" were many. He was the first man to do a comprehensive study and analysis of every known ink, present and past. He was the first investigator to study bullets or bullet-pocks and then trace back the trajectory with a string. He was the first to use the stereoscopic microscope for ballistics comparison. He inaugurated the first workable system for filing and cross-indexing fingerprints in the average police headquarters. He was the first to set up files of the characteristics of every commercial typewriter, modern and ancient, American and foreign. He was the first to make microphotographs of cross-sections of human hair, breaking it down into racial groups, parts of the body, and even to sex! He was the first man to apply a dozen different sciences to the criminological problem at hand. And because of his pioneering came other men perhaps far more famous, men like Vollmer and Wilson and a dozen others who were to make history in the new field of absolute scientific criminal investigation.

Oscar Heinrich revolutionized police methods throughout the USA. Much that he originated sems old hat to us now, perhaps, but because of him and the techniques he developed, the guilty tremble and the unjustly suspected can take heart.

Yet all through his busy, useful life, Heinrich tried to keep as much as possible in the background. He avoided personal publicity, and laughed off "The Wizard of Berkeley" appelation —he was only a simple chemist, he said—just after he had inaugurated the use of fluorescent light and iodine vapor to show invisible bloodstains or point out alterations in documents. "Just a simple chemist!"

In his rare off hours he puttered in his garden, trying to grow bigger and better strawberries. He was still actively busy, both with classroom lectures and with criminological cases from all over the nation, when he died suddenly from a stroke on September 28th, 1953, with his beloved wife by his side. It was their 45th wedding

anniversary, and they were celebrating it at home, alone.

He was just a quiet, unassuming, balding, stooped man in a Herbert Hoover collar, who always wore spotless white smocks in the laboratory and liked to be called *Mister* Heinrich, a man who puttered among his strawberries, went to work on a streetcar carrying his lunch, and who for more than a thousand times helped to see that justice was done, let the chips fall where they might.

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trial by battle

by Alexandre Dumas

THE CORONATION.

EASTER-EVEN, in the year of our Lord 1099, was held as a high festival in the fine city of Barcelona: it was the coronation-day of the young Count Raymond Berenger the Third, whose twelvemonth's mourning for his lamented father and sovereign was to close with his own solemn inauguration. The count had accordingly, by his letters patent, convoked to his good city of Barcelona the bishops, barons, knights, and also the ambassadors from foreign courts, to witness him take his knighthood and receive from the altar, and place upon his head, the garland of golden roses which formed the coronet of the Counts of Arragon.

At the appointed day, not only the prelates, barons, and chi-

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When I was eight years old, I already had a small group of novels by Dumas — not only the D'Artagnan saga but also several other novels, some of which I still have. I knew nothing then about the incredibly gifted — and generous — and courageous man who was Alexandre Dumas. I only knew that he seemed to make history come alive (as he does in this story of the medieval trial, or appeal by battle) and I have always felt that my own interest in and love for history stems from those days. The more than eighty novels that I have today, including several of the long forgotten Peterson paperbacks (has anyone ever seen their monthly Counterfeit Detector and Bank Note List?) are only a part of this incredibly prolific writer's works.

H.S.S.

A free translation of Dumas' PRAXEDE, by Jane Strickland, published in the September, October and November, 1852, issues of Graham's Magazine, published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

valry of Spain repaired to the festival, but a great many foreign lords and princes: the Judge and the Archibshop of Albera, from Sardinia; the King of Arragon, from Saragossa; the King of Castile, from Madrid. The Moorish sovereigns of Tlemecen and Granada, not being able to come in person, had sent rich presents to the count, with congratulatory epistles by the hands of their ambassadors. Indeed, so great was the concourse to Barcelona on this day, that thirty thousand stirrups belonging to gentlemen of condition were counted in the city and its environs.

This concourse was too great for the count to receive at his own palace of Aljaferia, which stood a short distance from Barcelona: he was therefore compelled to limit the number of his guests to kings, prelates, princes, ambassadors, and their suites; and there were present in Barcelona at that time four thousand persons who claimed his hospitality as their right.

Throughout the day an immense crowd traversed the streets, visited the churches, or amused themselves with the tricks of the jugglers and mountebanks, passing from devotion to mirth, and from mirth to devotion; but toward evening every one took his way to the palace, for the count was to watch his arms that evening in the church of St. Saviour. The whole road to the palace, two miles from the city, was illuminated by torches, which were kindled before the close of the day, the moment the vesper-bell was rung. This broad avenue of light defined the route to the church of St. Saviour, and as soon as this was effected, the heralds appeared with the banners of the Count of Barcelona, and marshaled the people on each side, that the *cortége* might have room to pass, unobstructed by the pressure of the crowd. At the last stroke of the vesper-bell, the gates of the palace opened, amidst the joyful shouts of the multitude, who had been awaiting that event since the hour of noon.

The first who appeared in the procession were the noble knights of Catalonia, on horseback, wearing the swords of their forefathers; valiant blades, gapped by hard service in battle or tournament, bearing names like those of Charlemagne, Roland, and Réné.

Behind them came their squires, bearing the arms and naked swords of their masters, which, unlike the ancestral brands the knights had displayed, were bright and unstained; but they knew that in the hands of their owners they would soon lose their virgin

brightness and lustre in the turmoil of battle.

Next appeared the sword of the lord count, made in the form of a cross, to recall continually to his mind that he was the soldier of God before he became an earthly prince. Neither emperor, king, nor count had ever before worn a sword better tempered, or more richly embossed with jewels on the handle. It was in the hands of Don Juan Ximenes de la Roca, one of the bravest knights in the world, who held it till the time should arrive when it would pass into those of its master. He was supported on each side by the Baron Guglielmo di Cervallo and Sir Otto de Monçada.

After the sword of the lord count came to his equerries, in two chariots, bearing lighted torches, and charged with ten quintals of wax, to be offered as a gift to the church of St. Saviour, because the count had vowed a taper to the altar, to expiate the fault his filial duty had obliged him to commit, since, detained in his own country by the long illness of his father, he had not departed for the Crusade. This wax taper had gone in solemn procession through the city, to prove the penitence of the count, who felt grief as a knight, and remorse as a Christian.

After the chariots came the lord count himself, mounted on a steed magnificently caparisoned. He was a beautiful youth between eighteen and nineteen, wearing long ringlets on his shoulders, waving on either side, but restrained from concealing his open brow by a fillet of gold. He wore his close-fitting coat of war, for during the watch he would have to assume his armor; but this vestment was covered with a large mantle of cloth of gold, which fell even to his stirrups. Behind him followed his arms, carried by two nobles, consisting of a helmet, with the visor closed; a coat of mail of polished steel, inlaid with gold; a buckler, on which was engraved the garland of roses, the well-known sign of sovereignty of the Counts of Barcelona. The nobleman who bore these arms was accompanied by Roger, Count de Pallars, and Alphonse Ferdinando, Lord of Ixer, both with their swords drawn, to defend, if necessary, the royal armor.

After the armor of the lord count came, in pairs, the nobles upon whom he was to confer the honor of knighthood. They were twelve in number; and these, in their turn, were each to arm ten knights as soon as they had received the order; and these hundred and twenty came also in pairs, their fine horses magnificently caparisoned, and covered

with cloth of gold.

Last of all, four abreast, came, first, the prelates; then the kings and the ambassadors from foreign courts, who represented the persons of their sovereigns; then the dukes, counts, and knights; each degree separated by the musicians, who rent the air with their trumpets, timbrels, and flutes. The last rank in the pageant was followed by the *jongleurs,* or jugglers, in the costume of savages, running on foot, or mounted on little horses without bridle or saddle, on whose backs they exhibited a variety of tricks.

Thus, by the aid of the flambeau, which changed night into day, and darkness into light, and with the mighty sound of drums, tymbals, trumpets, and other musical instruments, aided by the shouts of the *jongleurs,* and the proclamations of the heralds, who called out — "Barcelona! Barcelona!" the count was conducted to the church, having been seen by every one, on account of the slow progress of the procession, and the length of way between the palace and the sacred edifice. The hour of midnight, indeed, struck the moment the count alighted at the porch, where he was met by the Archbishop of Barcelona, and all the clergy.

The lord count, followed by all the nobles who were to receive their arms, entered the church, and watched them together, according to old custom on such occasions, reciting prayers and singing psalms in honor of their Saviour. They passed the night very happily in these devotional services, and attended matins, which was performed by the archbishops, bishops, priors, and abbots.

When the day broke, the church was opened to the congregation of the faithful, who filled it in such a fashion, that it was wonderful how so many men and women could be so closely crowded together without injury to themselves or their neighbors. The archbishop then made himself ready to say mass, and the lord count put on a surplice, as if he intended to assist him; but over the surplice he wore a richer Dalmatica than emperor or king had ever appeared in, clasped at the throat with a diamond star, set round with pearls of inestimable value. Then he assumed the manipule, or girdle, which was also very splendid; and every time he was invested with a new garment, the archbishop repeated a prayer. This ceremony being finished, the archbishop said mass; but when the epistle was ended he paused—when the two godfathers of the count, Don Juan Ximenes de la Roca, and Don Alphonse Ferdinando, Lord of

Ixer, approached the count, and one affixed the spur to his right heel, the other to his left—the solemn notes of the organ accompanying this part of the ceremonial. Then the count, approaching the altar, knelt before the shrine, and repeated to himself a whispered prayer, while the archbishop, standing by his side, prayed aloud.

When this prayer was ended, the count took the sword from the altar, kissed meekly the cross that formed its handle, girded it to his loins, and then, drawing it from its scabbard, brandished the knightly weapon three times. At the first flourish, he defied all the enemies of the holy Catholic faith; at the second, he vowed to succor all widows, orphans and minors; and at the third, he promised to render justice all his life to high and low, rich and poor, to his own subjects, and to foreigners who might require redress at his hands. At this last oath, a deep sonorous voice replied "Amen." Every body turned round to see the person from whom this response proceeded; it came, however, from a Provençal *jongleur,* who had crowded into the church, notwithstanding the opposition made by those who did not consider him fit to be in such good company; but the count, having heard the quality of his respondent, would not allow him to be turned out, declaring—"that it would ill become him at such a moment to refuse the prayer of any one, be he lord or vassal, rich or poor, provided it came from a pure and contrite heart." The *jongleur,* in virtue of this declaration on the part of the lord count, was permitted to keep his place.

The lord count then, returning his sword to the scabbard, offered his person and his blade, by a solemn act of dedication, to God; praying him to take him into his holy keeping, and to give him the victory over all his enemies. The archbishop, after the lord count had uttered this prayer, anointed him with the holy chrisme on the right shoulder and arm; then he took the crown of golden roses from the altar and set it on his head, the godfathers of the lord count supporting the diadem on each side. At the same instant, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, kings, princes, and the two godfathers of the lord count chaunted in chorus, with loud voices, *Te Deum Laudamus,* during which the lord count took the golden sceptre in his left, and the globe in his right hand, and held them while the *Te Deum* was chanted and the gospel read. He then replaced them on the altar, and seated himself in his chair of state, before which twelve

nobles led up twelve knights, whom they armed one after the other; these, in their turn, retired to one of the twelve chapels belonging to the church, and armed, in like manner, ten knights.

The coronation being concluded, the lord count, with his crown on his head, bearing the golden sceptre and globe in his hands, and wearing the dalmatica, star, and belt, came out of church, and mounted his horse; but as he could not guide his steed, encumbered as he was with these insignia of his high power and dignity, two pairs of reins were attached to the bridle, that on the left being held by his godfathers; the others, which were of white silk, and forty feet in length, were held by the barons, the knights, and the most eminent citizens of Catalonia; and after these came six deputies from Valencia, six from Saragossa, and four from Tortosa; those who held the reins to the right or left marched on foot, to denote their subjection to the count, their lord paramount, who, in this stately manner, and with this magnificent *cortége,* toward noon returned to his palace of Aljaferia, amidst loud hurrahs and flourishes of trumpets. As soon as he alighted, he entered the dining-room, where a high throne had been prepared for him between two golden stools, on which he deposited the sceptre, the globe, and the crown. Then his two godfathers seated themselves near their sovereign, and the Kings of Arragon and Castile, the Archbishops of Saragossa and Arboise placed themselves by their side. At another table, the bishops, dukes, and all the new-made knights took their places; after them, the barons, envoys of the provinces, and the most eminent citizens of Barcelona, all marshaled according to their degree, were seated in due order, the whole assembly being waited upon by the junior nobility and knights.

The lord count himself was served by twelve nobles. His *major domo,* the Baron Guglielmo di Cervallo, brought in the first dish, singing a roundel; he was followed by twelve noblemen, each carrying a dish, and joining in full chorus. As soon as the roundel was concluded, he placed the dish before the lord count, and cut a portion, with which he served him; then he divested himself of his mantle and vest of cloth of gold, trimmed with ermine, and ornamented with pearls, and gave them to a *jongleur.* As soon as he had arrayed himself in vestments of the same rich material, the *major domo* brought, in like manner, and followed by the same nobles, the first dish of the

second course, singing a roundel as before, and concluding the ceremony by the gift of his magnificent costume. He conducted, after this fashion, ten courses, with songs, and concluded with the usual rich largess, to the great admiration and astonishment of the whole assembly.

The lord count sat three hours at table, after which he rose, took up the globe and sceptre, and entering the next chamber, placed himself on a chair raised on a platform, with steps. The two kings were seated on each side the throne, and round them, on the steps, all the barons, knights, and eminent citizens. Then a *jongleur* approached, and sang a new *sirvente,* which he had composed for this august occasion, entitled —"The Crown, the Sceptre, and the Globe—"

"The crown being quite round, and this circle having neither beginning nor end, signifies the great power of God, which he has placed, not on the middle of the body, nor yet on the feet, but on your head, as the symbol of intelligence; and because he has placed it on your head, you ought always to remember this omnipotent God; may you, with this earthly and perishable crown, win the celestial crown of glory in the eternal kingdom.

"The sceptre signifies justice, which you ought to maintain and extend to all ranks; and as this sceptre is a long rod with a curve, fit to strike and chastise, thus justice should, in like manner, punish, that the wicked may leave off their bad ways, and the good may become better and better.

"The globe signifies, that as you hold the globe in your hand you also hold your country and your power; and since God has confided them to you, it is necessary that you should govern with truth, justice and clemency, that none of your subjects may sustain injury from yourself or any other person."

The lord count appeared to hear this *sirvente* with pleasure, like a prince who laid the good counsel it contained to heart, and intended to put it in practice.

The *sirvente* was followed by a song in twelve parts, and the song by a poem in three cantos; and when all was said and done, the lord count, who was much fatigued, took up the globe and sceptre, and went into his chamber to get a few minutes' sleep, of which, indeed, he was much in need. His attendants had scarcely unclasped his mantle of state, before he was informed that a *jongleur* must speak with him, having affairs of interest to communicate,

which would not bear delay. The lord count ordered him to be admitted.

The *jongleur* advanced two steps, and bent his knee to the ground.

"Speak!" said the count.

"May it please your lordship to order that you should be in private with your servant?"

Raymond Berenger made a sign to his people that he wished to be alone with the *jongleur.*

"Who are you?" asked he, as soon as the door was shut.

"I am," said the *jongleur,* "the person who answered 'Amen,' in the church of St. Saviour, when your lordship vowed, sword in hand, to render justice to the high and low, the rich and poor, to foreigners as well as your own subjects."

"In whose name do you ask justice?"

"In the name of the Empress Praxida of Germany, unjustly accused of adultery by Guthram de Falkemberg and Walter de Than, and condemned by her husband, the Emperor Henry the Fourth, to die, unless a champion, within a twelvemonth and a day, successfully defend her innocence against her accusers."

"Why has she chosen such a singular messenger for this important mission?"

Because none but the poor *jongleur* dared expose himself to the anger of a powerful prince, and the vengeance of two renowned knights like Guthram de Falkemberg and Walter de Than; and certainly I should not have ventured to do so myself, if my young mistress, Douce, Marchioness of Provence, who has such fine eyes and such a touching voice that no one can refuse what she asks, had not required it of me. I went, therefore, by her command, in search of a knight sufficiently brave to defend, and sufficiently powerful to dare to vindicate, the fame of an injured and innocent lady. I have traversed, in obedience to my mistress, France and Italy in vain, and even Spain, the very holy land of chivalry, and found no one disposed to championize the Empress of Germany. On the way to Barcelona I heard you named as a generous and courageous gentleman. I entered the church at the moment you vowed, sword in hand, to defend the oppressed against the oppressor; and it appeared to me that the hand of God had led me there. I raised my voice, and cried 'Amen, so be it!' "

"So let it be, then," chivalrously replied the count; "for the honor of my name, and the increase of my renown, in the name of the Lord, I will hold myself ready to undertake this enterprise."

"Thanks, my lord, for this

grace; but, saving your good pleasure, you have no time to lose, for ten months have already elapsed, and you will have little left for your journey to Cologne."

"Well; these festivals will be ended by Thursday night; on Friday we shall offer up our public thanks to God; and on Saturday we will put ourselves *en route* for Cologne."

"Let it be so, according to your lordship's pleasure," replied the *jongleur,* making his farewell devoir to the Count of Barcelona. Before he could withdraw from his presence, the count detached from his neck a magnificent gold chain of great value, and threw it round that of the *jongleur;* for the lord count was as generous as he was brave, and the union of these qualities acquired for him the surname of Great, an appellation which the judgment of posterity has confirmed to the sovereign of Barcelona. He was pious, too; for these festival-days were designed to do honor to Easter, the day of the resurrection of the Redeemer; and the gracious rain that, after a long period of drought, descended on Catalonia, Arragon, and the kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia, the evening on which these religious *fêtes* concluded, gave to his people the presage of a long and happy reign, of which, indeed, Barcelona still preserves the memory.

THE CHAMPION.

THE Emperor Henry IV. of Germany, the husband of the falsely accused empress, was one of the bravest and most unfortunate princes who ever sat upon a throne. He had succeeded his father, Henry the Black, in 1036, at the age of six years, and the diet had given to Agnes of Aquetaine the administration of the affairs of state during his minority. But the princes and barons of Germany feeling themselves humiliated by their subjection to a foreign female, revolted against the empire, and Otho, Margrave of Saxony, commenced that series of civil wars, in which the emperor was destined to consume his life. Thus Henry IV. was always engaged in contests, first with his uncles, and then with his son; sometimes an emperor, sometimes a fugitive; to-day a proscriber, to-morrow proscribed; but always a "man of war and wo," even in his greatest triumphs. After having deposed Pope Gregory VII—after having, in expiation of that sacrilege, crossed the Appenines on foot, his staff in his hand, like a mendicant, in the depth of winter—after having waited three days in the court of the Castle of Canossa without

clothes, without fire, without food, till it pleased his highness to admit him into his presence, he kissed his feet, and swore on the cross to submit himself to his authority; for at this price alone would the pope absolve the imperial penitent of the guilt of sacrilege; but the humiliation of the emperor displeased and disgusted the Lombards, who accused him of cowardice. Threatened by them with deposition, if he did not break the shameful league he had made with the pope, he purchased peace with the Lombards by renouncing his submission to Gregory. His acceptance of these terms set him at variance with the German barons, who elected Rodolphe, of Suabia, in his place. Henry, who had gone to Italy as a suppliant, returned to Germany a soldier, though under the ban of the church, for his rival, Rodolphe, had received from Pope Gregory a crown of gold, in token of his investure by him of temporal dominion, and a bull invoking the malediction of heaven upon his enemy. Henry defeated and slew Rodolphe at the battle of Wolskieur, near Gera, after which he returned victorious and furious into Italy, bring with him the Bishop Guibert, whom he had made pope. This time it was for Gregory to tremble, who could not expect more mercy than he had shown to Henry. He shut himself up in Rome, and when the emperor appeared under the walls, sent a legate to make up the quarrel, by the offer of the investiture of the crown, and absolution and reconciliation to the church. Henry's only reply was the capture of the city. The pope fled to the Castle of St. Angelo, where he was put in a state of blockade by Henry, who placed upon the papal throne the Anti-Pope Guibert, from whose hand he received the imperial crown. He had scarcely done this before he received the annoying intelligence that the Saxons had elected in his room, Hermann, Count of Luxembourg. Henry repassed the Apennines, beat the Saxons, subdued Thuringia, and took Hermann prisoner, whom he permitted to live and die unknown in an obscure corner of his empire. He once more re-entered Italy, where he caused his son Conrad to be elected King of the Romans. Believing he had settled peace on a firm basis, he came back to Germany, and turned his arms against the Bavarians and Suabians, who still remained in a state of revolt.

His son, whom he had just made king of the Romans, and who aspired to the empire, conspired at that time against his father, raised an army, and got Pope Urban II. to excommuni-

cate him a second time. Henry upon this convoked the diet to Aix-la-Chapelle, laid open before it his paternal grief, and displayed the wounds of a heart wrung by filial ingratitude, and demanded that his second son, Henry, should be acknowledged for king of the Romans, in the place of his brother. In the midst of the sitting, he received a mysterious intimation that his presence was required at Cologne, where he was told, an important secret would be made known to him. Henry quitted the diet in great haste; and found two of the noblest barons in the empire, Guthram de Falkenbourg and Walter de Than, waiting for him at the gates of his palace. The emperor invited them to enter with him, and led them into his chamber, when perceiving sadness and gloom painted on their faces, he demanded "why they appeared so thoughtful and sorrowful!"

"Because the majesty of the throne is in danger," replied Guthram, with some abruptness.

"Who has endangered the throne?" demanded the emperor.

"The Empress Praxida, your wife," said Guthram.

No other tidings would have made Henry of Germany turn pale, for he had only been married to the empress two years, for whom he felt the tenderness of a parent, and the faithful love of a husband. His union with this angelic young woman had given him the only happy hours he had passed during his stormy and unfortunate life. He had not courage at this miserable moment even to ask what his wife had done, but was gathering the strength of a failing heart to do so, when Guthram broke the ominous silence, by saying, "she had done what we cannot pass by unnoticed, for the honor of the imperial throne, and we should deserve the name of traitors to our sovereign lord, if we should hesitate to make her misconduct known to him."

"What has she done?" again demanded the emperor, growing paler than before.

"In your absence she has encouraged the love of a young knight, and that so openly," replied Guthram, "that if she gives birth to a son, however the people may rejoice in that event, your nobility will mourn; for though any master is good enough for the multitude, none but the noblest in the empire can command the highest nobles in the world, who will render homage to none but the son of an emperor."

Henry supported himself against the chair of state on which he leaned, or he would have fallen to the floor, for he remembered that only a month before, the empress had written

to him to announce her maternal hopes, with the pleasure natural to a young woman about to become a mother.

"What has become of the knight?" asked the emperor.

"He quitted Cologne as suddenly as he entered it, without any person knowing from whence he came, or whither he is going. His country and name are secrets with which we are unacquainted, but you had better ask the empress, she perhaps, can satisfy your majesty."

"Very well," replied the emperor. "Enter, gentlemen, that cabinet." Then the emperor summoned his chamberlain, and bade him conduct the empress to his chamber. As soon as the emperor was alone, he threw himself into the chair, like a man who had lost his personal strength and mental firmness. He who had endured with unbending fortitude civil and foreign wars, the ban of the church, and the filial revolt, yielded to a doubt. His head, which had borne the weight of a crown for five-and-forty years, without bending beneath the burden, grew feeble under the weight of a suspicion, and hung down as if the hand of a giant was upon it. In a moment the man, who had scarcely passed his full meridian of intellect, forgot every thing—empire, ban, malediction, revolt. He remembered nothing, but his wife, the only human being who possessed his entire confidence, and who had deceived him more basely than any other creature had yet done. Much as he had experienced, throughout his long regnal life, of disloyalty and guile, tears fell from his eyes, for the rod of misfortune, like that of Moses, had struck the rock so forcibly, that it had drawn these drops from a source hitherto sealed up and barren.

The empress entered unseen, for her light step had not been heard by her unhappy husband. Fair, blooming, and blue-eyed, with a graceful form, of tall and slender proportions, this daughter of a northern clime approached her lord with a sweet smile, and with almost filial reverence united to conjugal affection, imprinted a chaste kiss on the troubled brow of her lord, who shrank and shuddered as if the touch of her rosy lips had been the fangs of a serpent.

"What is the matter, my lord?" asked the empress, in a tone of alarm.

"Woman," replied the emperor, raising his head and showing her his tearful eyes, "you have seen me for four years carrying a heavy cross; you have seen my crown a crown of thorns; you have seen my face bathed in the sweat of toil, my brow in blood; but you never

saw my eyelids moistened with tears. Well, behold me now—and see me weep!"

"And why do you weep, my dearly-loved lord?" replied the empress, in a tone of sorrowful inquiry.

"Because, abandoned by my people, denied by my vassals, cursed by the church, and proscribed by my son, I had nothing but you in the world—and you, Praxida, you too have betrayed me."

The empress stood like a statue, only her complexion, varying from red to pale, betrayed her feelings. "My lord," said she, "it is not true. You are my liege lord and my sovereign master; but if any other man than yourself had dared to utter such words, I would answer that he lied through envy or malice."

The emporor turned in the direction of his cabinet, and in a loud voice said, "Come in." The door opened, and Guthram de Falkenbourg and Walter de Than entered the imperial chamber. The empress, at the sight of her enemies, trembled all over. They advanced to the other side of the emperor's chair, and, holding up their hands, prepared to make their unjust accusation good upon the first sign he might give.

He mentioned them to speak, and they were not slow to avail themselves of his permission.

"Sire," said they, "what we have told you is true; and we are ready to support the charge at the peril of our bodies and souls, two against two, against any knights who may dare to dispute the truth of our impeachment of the empress."

"Do you hear what they say, madam? for it shall be done as they have demanded; and if, in a year and a day, you cannot find any knights to clear your fame by a victorious combat, you will be burned alive in the great square of Cologne, in the face of the people, and by the torch of the common hangman."

"My lord, I invoke the aid of God," replied the empress, "and I hope, by His grace, my truth and innocence will find vindicators, and will be completely established."

"Well, be it so," said the emperor; and he summoned his guards, to whose wardship he consigned his empress. By his command she was conveyed to the lowest apartment in the castle, which differed in nothing from a prison but in name.

She had beeen imprisoned nearly a twelve-month, and had given birth to a son, condemned, like herself, to the pile. This babe she nourished at her own bosom, and reared with her own hands, like one of the wives of the people. None of her women paid her any attention or ren-

dered her the smallest service, but Douce, Marchioness of Provence, who, having abandoned her own country, then the theatre of civil war, to seek an asylum at the court of her suzerain, had remained faithful to her mistress in her misfortunes. The empress, who had diligently exerted herself, by letters and promises, to procure champions for her ordeal by battle, had been hitherto completely unsuccessful. The renown of her accusers, their prowess in war and revengeful dispositions, had outweighed all her entreaties and largesses. Only three days of the time allowed by the emperor now remained, and the envoy sent by the fair Marchioness of Provence had not yet returned. She began to despair herself — she who had always soothed the despondency of the injured empress with hope.

As to the poor emperor, no one suffered like him; struck by this blow at once as sovereign, husband, and father, he had vowed publicly to join the Crusades, in the hope of averting the wrath of heaven; and the day he had fixed for the vindication or execution of the empress, would bring to him as severe a trial as to that unfortunate and injured princess. He had, at length, given the matter into the care of heaven, and, immuring himself in the most private apartments in his palace of Cologne, gave up all business, whether public or private, having no heart to attend to any thing whatever. Such was the state of his mind when the dawn of the three hundred and sixty-fifth day found him still miserable, and his accused empress championless.

At noon, he had scarcely quitted his oratory when he was told that a foreign knight, from a distant country, wished to speak to him. The emperor was agitated, for, at the bottom of his heart, he secretly wished that heaven would yet send the unfortunate Praxida a champion; and he received him in the same chamber in which, sitting in the same chair, he had commanded the arrest of the empress. The knight entered, and bent his knee to the ground. The emperor bade him rise, and declare the occasion of his visit to his court.

"My lord," replied the unknown, "I am a Spanish count. I was told at matins that the empress, your spouse, was accused by two knights of your court, and that if, within the space of a year and a day, she could not find a champion to defend her by battle, she would be publicly burned. Now, I have heard so much good said of this lady, and she is so renowned for piety throughout the world, that I am

come from my own distant land to undertake her quarrel against both her accusers."

"Count, you are welcome," replied the emperor. "Certainly you show great friendship for the accused, or a great desire for renown. You are yet in time to save her, for there still remains one day before the sentence to which the laws of Germany condemn the adultress can be put in force against her."

"Sire," said the count, "I have a favor to ask you, which I hope you will courteously grant me. I wish to see the empress, for in this interview I should be able to form some opinion of her guilt or innocence; for, if I think her guilty, I will not imperil my body and soul in battle for her, but if she is innocent, I will fight, not only with one of her accusers, but with both, and indeed, will undertake her defense against every knight in Germany.

"It is but justice on my part," replied the emperor, "to grant your request, Sir Count."

The unknown bowed, and retreated toward the door, but the emperor recalled him. "My lord count, have you made a vow to keep your visor down, and conceal your face?"

"No, sire," replied the knight.

"Then you will do me the favor to raise your visor, that I may engrave on my memory the features of him who is about to imperil his life to save my honor?"

The knight took off his helmet, and the emperor saw the dark-complexioned, but expressive features of a young man of eighteen or nineteen years. His forehead and head were finely formed, and indicative of talent and power. The monarch regarded the youthful countenance of the champion with a sigh, and remembered with regret that the accusers of Praxida, his empress, were men not only well-skilled in war, but in the prime of manly strength. "May God preserve you, lord count," said he, "for you appear to me full young for success in the difficult enterprise you have undertaken. Reflect, for there is still time to withdraw your promise."

"Do me the honor to let me see the empress," replied the knight, who had no intention of abandoning without cause an unfortunate lady.

The emperor gave him his signet-ring. "Go then, Sir Knight; this seal will open for you the doors of her prison."

The knight kissed, on his knee, the hand which offered him the ring; then rose, saluted the monarch, and departed.

The sight of the emperor's signet opened, as he had said, the guarded apartment of the empress, and in ten minutes the

youthful champion found himself in the presence of the accused lady, for whom he was about to risk his life.

The empress was seated on her bed, nursing her infant. Accustomed to the entrance of her jailors, and for a long time abandond by her women, she never even raised her head when the door was opened, only, by the instinct of modesty, she covered with her mantle her unveiled bosom, still continuing the plaintive hymn by which she lulled her babe to rest, accompanying the air with the movement of a nurse who rocks her babe to sleep.

The knight contemplated for some minutes, in tearful silence, this moving picture of fallen greatness, till, perceiving that the empress seemed unconscious of his vicinity, he accosted her in these words: "Madam, deign to raise your eyes, and honor with your notice, a man whom the renown of your virtue has led from a distant land, to vindicate your honor, defamed, he trusts, by false accusation; but before I undertake your cause, it is absolutely necessary that I should learn from you whether you are innocent of the charge laid against you. For, madam, I require a clear conscience, as well as a strong arm, since a trial by battle is an appeal to God, the judge of all, to decide the cause by the victory or fall of the champion. In the name of heaven, I entreat you to speak the truth; in which case, if you can prove your innocence to me, I swear by my knighthood that I will defend you to the last drop of my blood; trusting that the Lord will strengthen me to do your battle with such power as will clear your honor, and preserve my own life."

"First, let me thank you, Sir Knight," replied the empress, shedding tears of joy; "but, before I clear up my fame in your hearing, I pray you tell me your name, and permit me to see your face."

"My face, madam, may be seen by everybody," said the count; "but my name is a different thing, since I have sworn to tell it to none but you." He removed his helmet, and displayed to her sight his noble and ingenuous countenance, full of the fire and intelligence of upright youth verging upon manhood.

"Your name and quality, then, be pleased to show me," replied the empress.

"I am a prince of Spain: Raymond Berenger, Count of Barcelona."

At that name, so celebrated from father to son for lofty generosity and heroic deeds, the empress clasped her hands together, while a smile of joy lighted up her beautiful features through

her tears, like a sunbeam breaking through a watery cloud.

"My lord, I can never repay you for the consolation you have afforded me this day; but you have demanded the truth from me—the whole truth: I ought to tell it to you, and I will not disguise it from your knowledge. It is true that there came, in my husband's absence, to the court of Cologne, a young and handsome knight, who perhaps, was under some vow, either to his sovereign or the lady of his heart, to conceal his name and rank; for he told them to no one, not even to me. It was supposed, from his magnificence and generosity, that he was the son of a king; but we called him, from the gem he wore on his finger, the Knight of the Emerald. It is true that he sometimes conversed with me; but with so much respect, that I could not distance him without appearing to consider his attention as a matter of more consequence than it really was. Still he made a point of attending me on every public occasion. It happened one day, when we were hawking on the borders of the Rhine, and were got as far as Lusdorf, without meeting any game, till at last a heron rose, and I unhooded and cast off my falcon, who immediately soared; and, as he was a fine one, of true Norwegian breed, he soon reached the quarry, and I put my horse to a full gallop, to be in at the death. Carried away by my ardor, I leaped a stream, followed by none of my ladies but Douce, for they were timid horsewomen. The wicked knights, who have falsely slandered me, could not take the leap on their heavy steeds, but led my ladies to a fordable part of the rivulet. While making to the spot where the game had fallen, we saw a mounted cavalier fly from it like a phantom, and reënter a wood along the shore. The heron we found fluttering in the agonies of death, for the falcon had pierced his brain; but he still held an emerald ring in his beak, which Douce, as well myself, immediately recognized as the one we had often seen on the finger of the unknown knight, whom we rightly supposed to be the cavalier who had galloped into the wood. I was wrong, I will own, to do as I then did; but women are vain and thoughtless. So, instead of throwing the jewel into the stream, as I ought, perhaps, to have done, I put it on my finger, and displaying it to my suite as they came up, related the adventure, without being aware of my own imprudence. Nobody, however, doubted the truth of my recital but Guthrum and Walter, who smiled incredulously, in a manner that seemed to ask ex-

planations which would have compromised my dignity, without allaying their unjust suspicions. I put on my glove, replaced my falcon on my wrist, without meeting with any other extraordinary discovery. At mass, however, I again met the knight of the emerald, and then perceived that he was without his ring, which, from that moment, I resolved to return to him upon the first suitable opportunity. A week after this adventure, the festival of Cologne was held. You are aware that this feast attracts a concourse of people from all parts of Germany: minstrels, players, and *jongleurs* of course abound. Among these last, there was a man who showed wild beasts, which he displayed on a theatre built for the occasion, in the grand square where the spectators could gaze without danger on a lion from Barbary, and a tiger from India. Seated in a gallery, raised fifteen feet above them—I was there with my ladies—when, happening to discover the knight of the emerald among the company, I was going to give the ring to Douce, in order to restore it to him, when a spring from the tiger, accompanied by a dreadful roar, so terrified me, that I dropped the jewel from my finger into the cage of the lion, which was immediately below the balcony in which I was placed. Instantly, bfore I could utter a word, I saw the knight in the theatre, sword in hand. The tiger remained for a moment quiet, apparently astonished at the unparalleled boldness of the action, before he sprung upon the dauntless stranger; then we saw what appeared like a flash of lightning, and the head of the monster rolled upon the sand, upon which his immense body and terrible paws were deeply impressed. The knight took a diamond agraffe from his cap, flung it to the wild-beast man, and thrusting his arm through the bars of the lion's cage, took up the ring I had dropped, and brought it to me, while the air rang with the acclamations of the spectators; but, as I had resolved to return it to him, I put back his hand, and said—'No, my lord knight; this ring has cost you to dear for me to retain. Keep it in remembrance of me.' These were the last words I ever addressed to him; for fearing the adventure would make more noise, I dispatched Douce with a message to the knight of the emerald, beseeching him in my name to quit Cologne. He departed the same evening, without informing me of his name or quality, or telling me whence he came, or wither he was going. This, my lord count, is the whole truth. And if I have been imprudent, I

have, I think, paid dearly for my fault, by a twelve-month's imprisonment, and a false accusation, that imperils my life.

The count drew his sword, and turning the cross of the handle most reverently toward the empress, said—

"Swear to me, madam upon this blade, that what you have just now related to me is perfectly true."

"I swear," replied the empress, "that I have told you nothing but the truth."

"Well, by this sword, and the help of God, you shall be delivered from this prison, in which you have been confined a year, and be cleared also from the deadly accusation that clouds your fame."

"May God grant it!" said the pious empress.

"Now, madam, will you bestow upon me one of your jewels, in token that you accept me for your knight?"

"My lord count, take this gold chain, the only relic of my former state that I still possess. This pledge will serve as a proof that I have chosen you for my champion."

"Madam, I take it with thanks," replied the Count of Barcelona, returning, as he spoke, his sword to its scabbard, and replacing his helmet on his head. He bowed courteously to the fair prisoner, and rejoined the emperor, who was anxiously expecting his return.

"Sire," said the count, "I have seen her majesty, the empress, and am satisfied with her explanations. Will you, therefore, be pleased to inform her accusers, that I am ready to do battle in her cause with one or both — either together, or by single combat."

"My lord count," replied the emperor, "you shall engage them separately; for it shall never be said that a knight who undertook the cause of an accused lady in so noble a manner did not find noble enemies."

THE JUDGEMENT OF HEAVEN.

UPON the appointed day, the Count of Barcelona, who had passed the preceding eve in masses and prayers, presented himself at the gate of the camp, mounted on a horse from Seville —a steed whose slender legs and light step made him rather resemble a courser for a *fête*-day than a battle charger.

The champion of the empress was clad in a coat of mail of polished steel, inlaid with gold, the work of the Moors of Cordova, in the midst of which shone a sun of diamonds, which threw rays like pointed flames; round his neck he wore the chain given him by the empress, for whose life and fame he was about to do battle. He struck the

barrier three times, and thrice he was asked by a herald who he was, to which he always gave this reply—"I am the Champion of God." At the third response, the gate was opened, and the Count of Barcelona entered the lists, which were arranged in an oval form, like the ancient classic circus, and bordered with seats, raised one above each other in tiers, filled at this time with the nobility of the Rhine, who had hurried to see the imposing and interesting spectacle.

At one end of the arena the Emperor Henry was seen, in his imperial robes, seated on his throne; on the other, in a wooden lodge, sitting on a common stool, was discovered the empress, dressed in black, holding her infant son in her arms. Directly opposite the hut in which she was immured, stood the pile destined to consume her and her babe, if her champion were defeated; and near it was placed the common hangman, in a red frock, his arms and legs bare, holding in one hand a chafing-dish, and in the other a torch. In the middle of the curve that formed the lists was an altar, whereon lay the holy evangelists, upon which a crucifix was placed. Opposite the altar stood an uncovered bier.

The Count of Barcelona entered the lists, which he rode round while a flourish of trumpets proclaimed to the accusers of the empress that the Champion of God was at his post; for by this sacred appellation the defender of him or her who appealed to the ordeal of battle was always styled in the ages of chivalry. The count stopped before the emperor, whom he saluted by lowering the point of his lance to his feet; backing his steed, whose head he kept toward the sovereign, till having reached the middle he made him spring on all his feet, executing this *demi-volte* in so able a manner, that everybody acknowledged him for a most gallant cavalier. Then he advanced slowly toward the lodge of the empress, curbing the ardor of the mettled charger, till he reached the spot where she was seated, when he dismounted, the noble animal standing as still in the lists as if he had been made of marble. Ascending the steps that conducted him to her side, as if to prove to all present his conviction of her innocence, he knelt on one knee, and asked her if she were still minded to accept of him for her champion.

The empress, overpowered by her feelings, could only extend her hand to him, in token of her acceptance of his services. The count took off his helmet, and kissed the offered hand of the empress with deep respect; then rising, with sparkling eyes, fas-

tened his helmet to the saddle-bow, replacing himself in the saddle with a single bound, and with no more assistance from the stirrups than if he had been clad in a silken vest. Opposite the altar, on the other side of the lists, he recognized the *jongleur* who had been the cause of his coming there, seated at the feet of a beautiful young lady, whom he rightly supposed to be the heiress of Provence. He advanced toward her, in the midst of the enthusiastic applause of the spectators, upon whom his youth, heroic beauty, and chivalrous bearing, had made a lively impression, and whose vows and prayers for his success were the more ardent because he appeared too young and slight to risk his life in single combat against two such formidable knights.

When the count reached the gallery where the fair Provençale was seated, he bowed to the very neck of his charger, till his dark ringlets veiled his face; and then raising his head shook back their scattered luxuriance, while, in the language d'Oc,* he addressed the marchioness thus: "Noble lady, a thousand thanks for the good enterprise you have considered me worthy to undertake; for, but for your message, I should have now been in my own land, without the opportunity of showing my devotion for the ladies, and my trust in God." He smiled as he uttered these courteous words, and looked into the fine eyes of the fair damsel, who blushed, and cast hers on the ground.

"Noble knight," replied the young lady, in the same tongue; "It is me who ought to express the debt of gratitude I owe you, since my invitation, sent by no higher messenger than a poor *jongleur,* has led you to cross seas, rivers, and mountains. You are come. Indeed, I cannot think how I have merited such great courtesy."

"There is no journey so long, no enterprise so dangerous, that I would not cheerfully undertake, in Christian land, or pagan clime, that a smile from your lips and a glance from your eyes would not repay. Therefore, fair damsel, should I grow weak in this combat, deign to regard me with a smile, and my strength and courage will return to me again."

At these passionate words the count bowed, and the lady blushed; but the flourish of the trumpets, that proclaimed his foes were in the field, summoned the champion from the side of the Marchioness of Provence to

*Tongue of the south, or Provence, in which part of France *oc* was used as the affirmative, instead of *oui*, as in the northern districts.—*Translator.*

his duty. He put on his helmet, and with three bounds of his fine horse was seen in the space between the pile and the empress; for the Champion of God, according to the rule of the trial by battle, ought to be near the accused, that her prayers and looks might encourage him during the combat.

Guthram de Falkenberg entered in his turn, arrayed in dark armor, and mounted on one of those heavy German horses who resemble those described by Homer; an esquire before him, with his lance, battle-axe and sword. At the gate of the lists he alighted, and advanced to the altar. When he reached its steps, he raised his visor, and laying his hand upon the crucifix, on his baptismal faith, his life, his soul, and his honor, vowed that he believed his quarrel to be just and good; adding to this vow his oath that neither he, nor his horse, nor his arms, were defended by herbs, charms, prayers, conjurations, leagues with the Evil One, or any enchantments whatever, by which he might hope to overcome his opponent. Then, having made the sign of the cross, he knelt at the head of the bier, and there made his prayer.

The Count of Barcelona alighted also, and in like manned advanced to the altar, where he made the same vows, and recited the same oath; and, after making the sign of the cross, knelt down to pray at the foot of the bier. In an instant the Libera was heard chanted by invisible voices, as if sung by a choir of unseen angels. The assistant priests, on their knees, repeated in low tones the prayers for the dying. Nobody remained standing at that solemn moment but the hangman, who was not allowed to join his ominous voice to those of the assembly, because his prayers were not likely, it was considered, to reach the eternal throne, or, if they did, to do those he prayed for the slightest good.

As the last note of the Libera died away, the trumpets sounded, the assistant priests took their places, the two combatants returned to their chargers, and replaced themselves in their saddles, remaining immovable, with their lances in rest, and their bucklers on their arms, guarding their breasts, like two equestrian statues, till the flourish of trumpets ceased, and the emperor, rising from his throne, and stretching forth his sceptre, pronounced, in a loud voice, the words *"Laissez aller."**

The two combatants careered against each other with the

*"You may go." This was the signal at trials by battle, passes of arms, and tournaments, for the combatants to engage.

same courage, but very different fortune; for scarcely had the heavy battle-steed of Guthram de Falkemberg run a third part of the course, when, clearing double the space with three bounds of his charger, the Count of Barcelona was upon him. For an instant nothing was seen but a dreadful shock, a lance shivered in a thousand splinters, and a confused vision of men and horses; another moment, the horse of Guthram rose without his rider, while the corpse of his master, pierced through with his adversary's lance, lay bleeding on the sand. The Count of Barcelona ran to the horse of his fallen adversary, seized him by the reins, and backing the reluctant animal, forced him to touch with the croup the barriers of the field; this manoeuvre, according to the known laws of chivalry, being a sign of mercy given by the victor to the conquered knight, whereby he gave his foe permission to rise, who was indeed conquered; but the generosity of the brave champion was of no avail to him; Guthram de Falkemberg would rise no more, till the sound of the last trumpet summoned his perjured soul to judgment.

A cry of joy broke from the vast multitude, whose wishes and prayers had been all along for the gallant and beautiful young knight. The emperor rose and cried, "Well struck;" Douce waved her scarf; the empress fell on her knees and gave thanks to God for her deliverance. Then the hangman descended slowly from his stand, unbound the helmet from the recreant knight, which he flung on the ground; after which he dragged the corpse by the hair of the head to the bier, and returning to the end of the lists remounted the pile.

The count went to salute the emperor, the empress, and the fair Marchioness of Provence; then, returning to his post as champion, he once more addressed the monarch:—"Saving, Sir Emperor, your pleasure," cried he, in a loud voice, "will you please to cause Walter de Than to be summoned into the lists?"

"Let Walter de Than be introduced," replied the emperor.

The barrier unclosed a second time, and Walter de Than entered the lists, armed *cap-à-pied,* and mounted as ready to make his false accusation good; but when he saw near him Guthram de Falkemberg, stretched on the bier, and remarked that a single thrust from the lance of the Champion of God had sent him to his dread account, instead of advancing to the altar, to take his lying oath, he rode up to the emperor, and, alighting from his horse, said: — "Sir Emperor, I

cannot obey your summons to the field; for nothing shall induce me to maintain the cause I have taken, for it is a false and accursed one, as, indeed, God, by his judgment on my sinful companion, has decided it to be. I, therefore, throw myself upon your mercy, that of the innocent empress, and the unknown knight—and a noble one he is—while I proclaim before the court and this assembly, that the whole charge brought by Guthram de Falkemberg and myself against my lady empress is false throughout; and that we were induced and suborned to calumniate her by Prince Henry, your second son, who, fearing lest you should finally prefer to him the babe of which your impartial spouse was then pregnant, devised this conspiracy against the life and honor of his stepmother, and the child she would bear. His gifts and promises corrupted us from our fidelity as true knights and loyal subjects. In virtue of this frank confession, I therefore implore your grace and mercy."

"You deserve no more mercy than the empress would have found, if she had not obtained from God a champion," replied the emperor. "Go, then, to her, and at her feet implore for pardon, for she alone can restore your life and honor."

Walter de Than crossed the lists amidst the hisses, groans, and yells of the spectators, and knelt down before the rescued empress, who was tenderly caressing her infant son, whom she regarded with the expression of a Madonna.

"Madam," said the recreant knight, "I come, by the command of my lord the emperor, to entreat your clemency; for, since I plead guilty to the wrong of preferring a false and calumnious charge against your honor and the legitimacy of my lord prince, you can do what you please with the criminal."

"Friend," replied the young empress, "you may depart in health and safety for me. I will take no vengeance upon you; God will deal with you according to his own pleasure and justice. Go, then; but never let me behold you in Germany again."

Walter de Than rose and departed, and from that day was seen in the imperial realms no more.

Then the emperor ordered the gate to be opened for the conqueror, who entered the lists once more; but this time looked round in vain for an enemy.

"Lord Knight," said the emperor to the Count of Barcelona, "Walter de Than will not fight with you. He has confessed his guilt to me, and demanded mercy; and I sent him to the empress, who has granted him

his life, on the condition of his leaving my dominions forever. She was too joyful and too full of gratitude for the deliverance God had granted her by your arm to be severe to him."

"Since it is so with him, I am satisfied," replied the Count of Barcelona; "and I ask no more."

Then the emperor descended from his throne, and, leading the charger of the victor by the bridle, in this manner conducted the count to the empress. "Madam," said he, "behold the knight who has so valiantly defended your righteous cause. You must give one hand to him, and the other to me, that we may conduct him to my throne, where we must all three remain, while justice be done to the corpse of Guthram de Falkemberg; after which, we shall in like manner lead you to the palace, where we will both endeavour to render him all the honor we can, in order to retain him as our welcome guest as long as we can prevail with him to remain at our court."

The empress quitted her station of doubt and shame, to kneel before the emperor, who raised and embraced her before the vast assembly, as a proof to them that she had recovered his confidence and love. Then he took one of her hands, and the Count of Barcelona the other, and in this manner she was conducted to the throne, upon which the emperor took his seat, placing her on his right hand, and the Champion of God on his left. As soon as they were seated, the hangman came into the lists a second time, and approaching the corps of Guthram de Falkemberg, cut with a knife the links of his armor, which he divided piece by piece, throwing them about the lists with these contemptous words: —"This is the helmet of a coward; this is the cuirass of a coward; this is the buckler of a coward." When the hangman had stripped the body in this manner, his two assistants entered with a horse dragging a hurdle, to which they attached the corps, which was then dragged through every street in Cologne to the public gibbet, where it was hanged by the heels, in order that everybody might come and see the dreadful wound through which the sinful soul of the recreant knight, Sir Guthram de Falkemberg, had issued forth to its dread account. And all who looked upon the guilty dead declared that only the just judgment of God could have enabled such a young and gentle cavalier to overcome such a great and renowned warrier in the trial by battle.

The emperor and empress brought the Champion of God

to their palace, where they made him a great feast; and, in order to do him honor, placed him at dinner at their own table, and by their side, and declared that they never intended to part with him. Now, the count wanted to return to his own good city of Barcelona, which he had left two months before with more chivalry than prudence. So, mindful of his duty as a sovereign, after he had done his devoir as a knight-errant, he stole out of the palace by night; and, having ordered hay and corn to be given his good steed at the hostelrie, and commanded his squire to groom him, he departed with great secrecy from Cologne, which he left that same night for his own dominons.

The next day, the emperor, missing the count from his table, sent a messenger to the hostel, where he supposed his summons to breakfast would find him. He was soon informed of the departure of his guest, who was supposed to be at least a dozen miles from Cologne by that time. The messenger soon returned to the emperor, to whom he said:— "Sire, the knight who fought for my lady the empress is gone, no one knows whither."

At this unexpected news Henry turned to the empress, and, in a voice which betrayed his displeasure, said:— "Madam, you have heard what this person has told me. I find your champion quitted Cologne last night, without leaving any trace by which he can be discovered and brought back."

"Oh, my dear lord!" exclaimed the empress, "you will be still more grieved when you learn the quality of this knight, with which, at present, I think you are unacquainted."

"No," replied the emperor; "he has told me nothing more than that he was a Spanish count."

"Sire, the knight who did battle for me is the noble Count of Barcelona, whose reknown is already so great that it exceeds even his lofty rank."

"How!" cried the emperor, "is this unknown knight no other than Raymond de Berenger. God indeed, sent him to my aid, madam; for the imperial crown has never been so highly honored before. He, however, makes me pay him very dearly by the disgrace and shame his sudden departure has cast upon me. I declare, madam, that I will not receive you into my love and favor till you find and bring him back to my court. Go away yourself for your journey as quickly as you can; for I will either see you with him, or see you no more."

"It shall be so, since you command it, sire," replied the empress, who was too well ac-

customed to the hasty manner and arbitrary disposition of her consort to contest his will, however unreasonable that will might appear to her. She had noticed the marked attention the handsome count had paid to her beautiful maid of honor, Douce, Marchioness of Provence, and, therefore, determined to include her in her train, which consisted of a hundred noble matrons, a hundred young damsels of quality, and a hundred knights; for Praxida resolved to travel in a style suitable to her lofty rank; and she used such expedition, that in two months from the time of her departure she found herself in the noble city of Barcelona. The astonishing report that the Empress of Germany, with a splendid retinue, had arrived at the principal hostelrie, quickly reached the noble count, who knew not how to credit it; till, mounting his horse, he rode thither, and recognized at the first glance the fair lady for whom he had lately fought. The delivered and deliverer met with equal joy, and, after the first salutation, the lord count, kneeling at the feet of the empress, asked "to what fortunate chance he owed the pleasure of seeing her in his own dominions."

"Lord count," replied the empress, "the emperor, my spouse, will not permit me to return to his court without you, for your presence at Cologne can alone restore to me his love and favor. Indeed, ever since he has known the honor the noble Count of Barcelona did the imperial crown by becoming my champion, he has resolved to share in no festivities till that happy day when he can welcome you to his court, and thank you for that act of courtesy in a manner befitting your high degree. Therefore, if you wish me to be once more recognized as Empress of Germany, you must hearken to my humble prayer, and accompany me to Cologne."

Upon hearing these words, the count once more knelt down, and presenting both his hands, in the manner of a prisoner awaiting his fetters, saying, "Madam, it is for you to command, and me to obey; do with me as with a prisoner."

The empress immediately took a golden chain, whose links encompassed her throat eight times, unwound it, and clasped one end round the right wrist of the Count of Barcelona, while she gave the other to the fair Marchioness of Provence, in whose gentle keeping she willed the captive to remain during the homeward journey. The prisoner, on his part, declared that he was too well satisfied with his guardian to wish to break her chains, unless she were

pleased to permit him to relinquish them for a time.

Three days after this interview, the Empress of Germany quitted Barcelona, with her retinue of three hundred noble knights and ladies, bringing with her its chivalrous soverign, in a chain of gold, held by her fair maid of honor; and in this manner traversed Roussillon, Languedoc, Dauphiny, Switzerland, and Luxembourg; the lord count, according to his vow, neither breaking his chain, nor showing any inclination to do so.

The *cortége* of the empress was met, five leagues from Cologne, by the emperor, who, being apprised of the coming of the Count of Barcelona, came to welcome him. As soon as he saw the brave cavalier who had saved the honor of his dearly-beloved wife, Henry IV. alighted; Raymond Berenger did the same, though still held in the chain of gold by the Marchioness of Provence. The emperor then warmly embraced and thanked him for the honorable service he had done him, by waving the battle of the Empress Praxida, and besought him to name his reward.

"My lord emperor," replied the count, "will you be pleased to command the Marchioness of Provence never to let me go, for, since I cannot depart from her wardship without her good pleasure, I think she ought not to quit mine; that thus, being fast linked together for the rest of our lives, we may never be divided from each other in this world, nor in that which is to come."

Douce of Provence blushed and even thought proper to make some maidenly opposition to an arrangement so pleasing to herself. The emperor, however, intimated to her, that, being her suzerain, whatever he chose to command she must obey. He therefore fixed the marriage for that day week; and Douce of Provence was so submissive a vassal, that she never even thought of requesting her lord paramount for the delay of a single day. It was in this manner that Raymond Berenger, Count of Barcelona, won the fair heiress, and became possessed of the marquisate and lands of Provence.

verbally inclined

by Dan Sugrue

He came in, a roughly dressed fellow in a threadbare mackinaw and red cap. He pointed at the bottle of VVO, and at the water tap. I served him and he paid for the drink with a five dollar bill. I gave him his change and he pointed at me, indicating that he wanted to buy me a drink. I accepted. It was the first drink among many that I was to have with him.

Every day the routine would be the same. He would come in, indicate what he wanted — in the morning it would usually be a coke, or seven-up — and after a few of these he would switch to beer for an hour or so, and then go back to the VVO.

The routine would vary only when he would ask me to give someone else a drink. When they accepted, he would raise his glass to answer the invariable salute.

Occasionally I would see him with a girl. Without exception they were attractive. I remember one . . . But that *is* another

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Bars in large cities are often, as in this instance, islands apart from the stream of life outside their doors. . . . They have their own code. The bar is home for the man who has no home, his club for the man who has no club; the one place where he can be alone — among many. . . .

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story. Anyway, he and the girl would sit, sometimes at the bar, more often in one of the booths, hold hands, look longingly at one another — and then, after a while, the girl would usually leave him sitting there alone.

But there were times, times that he would escort the girl out, pause at the door and shake his hands over his head in the prize-fighter's gesture of victory. Victory over the odds that say those we pick up in the early morning hours were better left alone, for we are lonelier for having met them. Victory over that night's loneliness perhaps . . . Personally I rather doubt it.

They were always pretty, sometimes young. Each possessed the gloss of availability wrapped in whisky sheen, or coated with vodka venure; promising an end, if but temporary, to the struggle that consumes us all, to be wanted.

Months passed. I served, he paid. He looked upon and lusted; I, more rarely, did the same. We felt and loved and wanted and slept at night badly or well in our separate ways, and yet we knew that we were, neither of us, completely alone, for the next morning he would be in for whatever the night before had made him crave. And — I would be there to serve him.

I felt that we possessed a sense of continuity in an ever changing world. There were other regulars, but none so regular. There were those I saw every day, and talked much more fully with. All about friends and acquaintances and girls and who was sleeping with whom and when we had had them last and how this or that would turn out, and who would be the most badly hurt (we always knew someone would be hurt. . . .) and we cared without caring, talked without — but never within.

He and me? We never talked at all nor, I think, really wanted to. We were satisfied in just understanding each other within the limits of our relationship. It was enough for me and, I thought, for him. Anything stronger would require responsibility on both our parts.

I knew that I did not want that. I sensed that *he* did not want that.

From time to time he would come in with a young man. A slim, good looking in a Latin sort of way, young man. Whenever this happened they would sit in one of the booths, drink a drink or two, and soon be joined by a couple of girls.

When I left for the day, turning the bar over to the night bartender, they would be sitting there, apparently enjoying themselves, listening to the jukebox, drinking. As I left, he would

either wink, or make a circle with his thumb and fore-finger. On occasion he would wave me over in an invitation to join the table. I always refused. Not because of a lack of liking, but rather a reluctance to disturb a satisfactory relationship. I had joined them once, went home with the girl, and had felt the shimmer of our disturbed relationship for months.

I came in in the morning as usual and, as usual, there were a group of the morning drinkers, whom the porter had let in, awaiting me. I opened the doors to all comers, paid the porter, and started to serve drinks. He was not there this morning and, as most of the regulars knew, this was unusual. I made passing comment and was greeted with utter silence instead of the usual wisecracks. They looked at one another for a long moment, then one of them said, "Didn't you hear?"

"Hear what?"

"Well, Bill tried to reach you five-six times last night. . . ."

"I was shacked up. What did he want me for?"

"To find out what to do about the Dummy."

"What are you talking about?"

"Well, the Dummy and that Spick pimp that he drinks with sometimes had some sort of argument, and the Spick leaned across the table and started to choke the Dummy."

"My God!" I said. "How can a mute provoke some one into choking him?"

"I don't know," said the customer. "He has always seemed quiet enough to me."

A couple of the boys started to laugh and I shut them up.

"Christ! I hope they broke it up!"

"Not in time. Before anyone really knew what had happened, the Dummy had pulled a knife and had cut the other guy's throat."

"Did he kill him?"

"No . . . But he sure ruined him."

"How come they didn't close the place up?"

"The pimp kept shaking his head *'no'* when the cops asked who did it. He shook his head *'no'* when they asked if it had happened inside the place too."

"The cops bought that?"

"Well, I don't think so . . . But the night bartender said he had just helped him inside while someone called an ambulance. Said that somebody passing by came in and told him somebody was bleeding to death outside."

"They went for *that?*"

"Hell! The guy that got cut said so. Why shouldn't they believe him?"

(Please turn to page 79)

the purple jacket

by Guy Tolman

The room was scarcely more than a cubicle, and the boy who crouched in a corner of it was dwarfed by the spreading shadow thrown by a battered goose-neck lamp. He dropped to his knees, almost in an attitude of prayer, and his hand moved slowly to the open bottom drawer of the bureau. His fingers caressed the slick, smooth cloth of the garment that laid there.

Luis had no need to look at the jacket. He'd taken it out of the bureau a hundred times in the last eight months, examined it lovingly, then folded it up and replaced it with care in the exact center of the drawer.

This was his most prized possession but he was forbidden to wear it. The jacket was made of parachute silk, dyed purple. On its back, in bold golden letters were emblazoned the words, Purple Dukes. He wasn't a member of the gang. Not yet. But after tonight it would be different. He'd have the right to wear the jacket boldly, proudly, swaggering along the block in the same way that his brother,

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Guy Tolman is the pseudonym of a nationally prominent writer in this field who has made a notable contribution towards our understanding of youngsters such as Luis who live in the shadows of our cities, and whose lives and whose futures are affected by the code and mores of these shadows.

Pedro, had done.

The jacket was a legacy from Pedro who'd been an Ace Man in the Purple Dukes. A picture of Pedro formed in his mind. The short, stocky body. The swarthy face with eyes like ripe olives. The slick black hair that always curled around the collar.

People had said that Pedro was the toughest, meanest kid in the block, a cat headed for double trouble. In a way they'd been right. But there was another side to Pedro that only Luis knew. He remembered Pedro's hand circling his shoulder, giving him a little hug.

"It's a lousy world" Pedro had told him. "For guys like us there's only one way to beat the rap. You got to know every dirty trick in the book. How to knee a guy in the groin, how to gouge his eyes out or break his fingers. How to use a shank or a broken bottle. How to pack a rod. But the main thing is never to let nobody see you're scared. When you're in a rumble, you blow your top and fight like crazy. You don't think about nothin' except how much damage you can do. Then nobody can call you chicken. You're top of the heap and people walk soft when you drop around. Just remember that, kid, and you'll be all right."

Not all of his toughness had done Pedro any good though. No matter how mean you are, you can't stop bullets with your body. And that's what Pedro had tried to do. The cops had walked right into the middle of a liquor store hold-up that Pedro and Harry Dow had staged. Harry had turned chickie and ran. But not Pedro. He'd fought it out until he went down with three slugs in his chest. Maybe that was the way he had wanted to go. How was Luis to know?

When Luis had heard the news, he'd barricaded himself in his room and bawled until there weren't any more tears left in him. Then, when he was sure the rest of the flat was empty, he'd slid out and down the stairs. At the landing below someone had called his name gently. He'd spun around and seen old Mrs. Gonzales standing in the doorway.

Gonzales was a witch. Maybe a hundred years old. Streaked grey hair. A big flabby body. A round moon face set off by rimless glasses. The crazy part of it was that Pedro had a thing about her. Sometimes he'd sit in her kitchen eating rice and beans or sipping wine. More than that, he'd passed the word among the Dukes that nobody was to bother her. She was safe as houses as long as she remained in Duke territory.

Luis had just looked at her, unable to speak. She'd crossed

the hall and put an arm about him. He'd jerked away from her, striking at her hand; then turned on his heel and clattered down the stairs. Half way down he'd hesitated, wanting to turn back, to talk to her about Pedro. But all that would buy him was to soften him up. And he had to be tough like Pedro had told him. He went on, nursing a flame of anger against the woman. He didn't need any sympathy from her; what he wanted was to reach the candy store where the mob hung out. They'd understand about Pedro. They'd know that he died a hero.

He'd done the right thing too. Even though he was too young to join the gang, the Dukes had taken him to their clubhouse that night. They'd plied him with sneaky Pete and he'd tried a reefer for the first time. He'd been sick afterward but he hadn't cared; it was a lot better than the cold, numbing emptiness that came of thinking about Pedro.

He'd spent the last eight months proving that he was as tough and as mean as his brother. He'd helped the Dukes pull a couple of scores and he'd rolled drunks in the subway while the mob looked on. Once when the cops had patted him down he'd yelled defiance at them until one of them had nearly belted his head off.

You'd think he'd have it made; that nobody could doubt what a brave, bold guy he was. But some of the Dukes were hard to convince, studs like Nick Ball and Charlie Dodo. For some reason they'd got it into their heads that he'd punk out when the going got too rough. But they were wrong. Dead wrong. Tonight he'd prove it. This was his fourteenth birthday and he was old enough to join the Dukes. All he had to do now was pass the initiation ceremony. He'd heard that could be tough but he didn't care. No matter what task they set for him, he'd go through with it. He had to. Because the most important thing in the world was that tomorrow he'd have the right to wear Pedro's purple jacket.

Time to go now. He slid out the window to the fire escape so not to awake Mom and have to listen to her yacking. The rusted rails took him past Mrs. Gonzalez's lighted window. He caught a glimpse of the old woman, her shapeless body swathed in a loose kimono, waddling across the kitchen. For some reason he couldn't understand, he watched while she lifted a steaming pot from the stove. Then as she started to turn, he darted on to the floor below. The fire escape ended here and he clung to the last rung and dropped nimbly to the

alleyway.

The gang was waiting for him at the clubhouse but nobody as much as cracked a smile when Charlie Dodo let him in and led him to the center of the floor. Then Nick Ball was standing in front of him, spraddle-legged, a sneer puckering his pencil-line mustache, his eyes hard and bright.

For no reason at all, Nick had slapped him hard, then backhanded him across the other cheek. Luis tried not to flinch and stared straight ahead. Nick was ranking him, trying to get under his skin. He mustn't flip or talk back. Whatever they handed him tonight he had to take and make believe he liked it.

Charlie Dodo came up beside Nick. His voice was jeering. "So you think you're big enough to fill Pedro's boots, huh? Well, you know what I think. You're a punk. You got a yellow streak two miles wide."

"Try me and see."

"That's just what we intend to do, but we're givin' you a chance to deuce out right now. If you're turkey, you better cop a nice long walk for yourself. Because once we tell you what this caper is there's no pullin' back. You try it and you ain't going to have no teeth. No ears either. There ain't going to be enough left of you to feed the fishes. So what do you say? Do you want in?"

"Yeah."

Charlie arched an eyebrow at Nick Ball. "The punk thinks he's tough. You tell him the score."

Nick's voice was soft. "You ever heard of a game called 'Chuco Chickie?"

Luis shook his head.

"Okay, here's the rules. We hand you a length of bicycle chain. You take it and walk right out of here. You can choose any direction you want but the first person you meet, that's your mark. You clobber him with the chain. You hit fast and hard. You lay him out so he don't do no yelling. Then you go over him for folding stuff. No watches. No jewelry. Just dough. Then you clear the hell out of there, but not too fast. No running. No noise. You keep on moving, soft and easy."

Luis gulped. He didn't like it. On every other job he'd had a chance to case the scene, to steel himself for swift, violent action. This way you didn't know what was coming. The first guy you met could be a truck driver. Even a cop. You might have to pull it under a street lamp or with the headlights of a car closing in on you.

But this was no time to hesitate. He said, "I'm with you. Let's get cracking."

Charlie's eyes glittered. "It's your show, kid. All yours. We'll be behind you just to make sure you don't punk. And get this straight—if you mess things up you're strictly on your own." His voice dropped to a purr. "And just in case you got any schemes in mind, you better take a look at this." He held out his hand and twisted it palm upward. There was a sharp metallic click as six inches of steel snapped into sight and caught the gleam of the overhead light. Charlie licked his lips. "You put in a squeal and this is what you get. Right here." He drew a finger across his throat and jerked his head toward Nick.

Nick nodded solemnly. "Check, kid, that's the way it is. That's how the cookie crumbles."

Outside Luis didn't know which way to turn. A drizzling rain had started to fall. The wet streets were deserted, with a chill wind whipping through them. It was late, past midnight, and nobody was about. A long way off he could see a figure stumbling along. Probably a drunk. It would be just his luck if the first person he ran across was a stumble-bum without a dime to his name. According to the rules of the game he'd have to roll him anyway. So what? A bum would be easy to take and he didn't take care about the dough.

He swung away from the clubhouse in the direction of the lone figure. Half a block behind he could hear the muted pad of footsteps and knew that Charlie and Nick were on his trail. When he was only a block away from his quarry, the man disappeared as though the night had swallowed him. He must have ducked into a doorway. Probably he was climbing the stairs to his own pad. Anyway he was safe.

Luis gave a sigh of relief. The ordeal was postponed for a few minutes. Besides he'd picked himself a bad street. The avenue was broad, heavily patrolled. Better find a dark side street. He veered to the right at the next corner. This was more like it. Trees shadowed the sidewalk. The only light was from a street lamp midway in the block.

He heard the mark before he saw who it was. He sucked in his breath and gripped the chain so tight that the nerves in his fingertips began to tingle.

A woman. He could tell by the tapping sound of her heels. He strained his eyes to see her but her figure blended into the heavy shadows thrown by the wall of an apartment house. Her footsteps came on, not too steady. Maybe she was old or had had a few drinks too many. A sudden sense of power stole over him. He'd do this job,

quick and neat. One blow, the snatching up of her purse, and it would all be over. He'd have nothing more to worry about.

He lengthened his stride and recognized his mistake too late. They'd meet just beneath the glow of the street lamp. He didn't dare hang back though. If he did, she might take alarm and scream or pull a bunk into one of the doorways.

He was on the fringe of the pale pool of light. He knew what he had to do. He'd take a single step past the woman, pretending not to notice her, then whirl around quick, lashing out at her with the chain, aiming for the neck so she'd go down without a sound.

He was almost abreast of her when a car whirred into the block. It sped along without stopping, its headlights flooding the street. The glare blinded him and threw him off his timing. He didn't dare make the strike before the headlights had swept past. He averted his face and held the chain against the black cloth of his slacks where she wouldn't notice it. But he was three steps beyond her before he wheeled around. Something must have alerted her to her danger because she'd swung around too and was standing directly beneath the lamp.

She was old and ugly, her tall thin body clad in a worn coat of rusty black. Shadows fell like a cawl across her face but even so he could sense the fear in her. Now was the time to step in quick before she could run or scream, before another car could nose into the block. That was what he ought to do, but still he hesitated.

There was something vaguely familiar about her and he tried to get a better look at her face. Only then did he realize that she wasn't staring at him but in the other direction where Nick and Charlie had crowded into the black oblong of a recessed doorway.

She took a step toward him, her hand fluttering out to touch his shoulder. She was appealing to him for protection. And that was crazy. A real laugh. Only he didn't feel like laughing because, as the glow of the lamp slanted across her face, swift recognition came to him. He didn't know her name but he'd seen her before. Plenty of times. Climbing the high narrow steps of the tenement to knock at the door of the second floor. She was a friend of Mrs. Gonzalez. Maybe she'd been a friend of Pedro's too.

Charlie's jeering voice came out of the darkness. "Shake the lead out, Luis. You ain't got all night. Or are you chicken, like I always said?"

Nick spoke more softly. "You

got ten seconds, kid. Then we're moving in."

There wasn't time to think; only to act by instinct. He flexed his fingers on the chain, swirling it in a little circle. But he knew he couldn't clobber the woman. Maybe he could have earlier but not now when he'd seen her face. It would be too much like betraying Pedro and the protection he'd given Mrs. Gonzalez.

He didn't say anything but slid in front of her, his back toward her, facing the doorway. He stood silent, waiting.

Nick was counting. "Nine—ten. We're coming in. So get set, you lily-livered punk."

The two figures slipped from the shadows, fanning out on either side of him, then sidling toward him, trapping him between them. The light glinted on the honed steel of their switchblades.

Charlie Dodo was the first to attack. He came dancing in, flicking the knife with little feinting motions, keeping out of the range of Luis' chain. Luis looped the chain in a double strand around his fist, letting it dangle by his side. If he tried to raise it high for a downward blow, it would give Charlie time to rush under his guard.

He edged away, swaying, balancing himself on the balls of his feet. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Nick, crouched and waiting. With a set-up like this, he'd have a chance to get in just one blow. Before he could pull away and get into position again, an arm would be around his throat, a blade plunged into his body.

He sensed that Nick was the more dangerous of the pair. Nick's relaxed body was deceptive. His lazy movements concealed his tense muscles, coiled to pounce forward like those of a cat stalking its prey. Charlie danced in closer, his lips curled back in a fixed grin. "Come and get it, man," he taunted. "What you waitin' for?"

Luis swung the chain outward in a tight arc, not aiming at Charlie, merely trying to force him back. Charlie bounced away like a boxer, the grin still on his face. Luis jerked the chain back and swirled about, rushing at Nick. the chain snaking out ahead of him, curling up and under Nick's wrist with bone-breaking force.

He heard Nick's howl of pain and the clatter of his blade on the concrete. He tried to break his rush but the chain had caught in the sleeve of Nick's jacket. He crashed into Nick and the two of them sprawled to the sidewalk. Luis rolled away but, before he could rise, Charlie was towering over him. Charlie's foot arched back and came thud-

ding into his ribs, knocking the breath out of him, sending searing flame through his chest. Luis lashed upward with his legs but Charlie was too quick. The second kick caught him beneath the shoulder, tumbling him over on his face.

He lay still, his body huddled against the next blow. But it did not come. He raised his head and became aware of screams, flashing lights and the pounding of footsteps. A prowl car slewed around the corner, its dome light flicking.

His pain was forgotten. He had to get out of here. But fast. He scrambled to his feet and started running, bent nearly double. Ahead of him he saw a dark alley between two buildings and raced toward it. A backward glance showed the old woman, grasping at the lamp post, Nick Ball lying in a heap, the prowl car angled to the curb, its door flying open, a cop in uniform clambering to the sidewalk.

The alley led to the next block. Here everything was dark. Tumble-down brownstones rose on either side, seeming to form a black canyon through which he must flee.

The sound of footsteps echoed all around him, drumming into his ears, spurring him to further flight. He couldn't tell whether the footbeats were his alone or whether there was another pair following close behind, tapping out a rhythm that matched his own. He tried to run faster but it was like running in a nightmare, where something pulls at your feet, sucks them down.

If he reached the next corner he'd be safe, he told himself. Somewhere close at hand there'd be a vacant lot where he could duck in and hide. But the street into which he emerged was one of shops, the sidewalks stippled with wan yellow light from the windows of poolrooms, candy shops and bars.

He ought to slow down, find a hiding place. But every half open doorway, every dark entry, could be a trap. He was gasping for breath. Sharp pains ripped along his side and his heart beat against the cage of his ribs like the blows of a hammer.

He couldn't keep going much longer. The thing to do was get back into the darkness. Find a spot where no eyes would be on him when he crumpled up. He darted across the street into another alley. A high board fence loomed in front of him and he knew that he was too weak to climb it. He started back, stumbled and fell. It was then that he saw the truck parked in the shadows of the fence. He rolled under it and cradled his face in his arms. He lay still, fighting back the sobs that racked his

body, for fear that their sound would betray him.

After awhile the pain eased up and the fear too, but still he did not move. At last he must have fallen asleep because, when he turned over, bright sunlight was glinting along the side of the building and the packed earth of the driveway showed brown with little clumps of dusty grass.

He rolled out from under the truck, and staggered to his feet. His body was stiff and a sharp throbbing in his chest made him wonder if a rib had been broken. He felt sick and wasn't sure he'd be able to make it home. But he'd have to try. He couldn't be too far away.

The pain grew worse and he kept stumbling. He had to grasp at the sides of the buildings not to collapse. But he stuck to it doggedly and, in time, he reached the old tenement where he lived. The rickety wooden steps seemed about ten miles high. Near the top of the last flight, he crumpled on to his hands and knees and started crawling.

It was then that he heard movement below him. Panic sliced through him. Charlie Dodo and some of the Dukes could have laid an ambush for him. But when he turned his head, it was only Mrs. Gonzalez.

She said, "Luis, I heard about last night. Are you hurt bad? Come in and let me fix you up."

He couldn't talk to anyone right now. "Leave me alone. That's all. Just leave me alone. You hear?"

"All right, Luis. But I'll be waiting. I'll have some rice and beans on the stove. Some red wine too."

She was still yacking, but he wasn't listening anymore. He pulled himself up and bolted up the last few steps.

Luckily nobody was home and he had the place to himself. He flung himself down on the cot and let the tears come. After a long time he got up, bathed and put on a fresh sports shirt and jeans. He felt better in clean clothes. He crossed to the window and stared out at the blank walls of the warehouse next door.

He'd bought himself a pack of trouble and he knew it, but somehow he wasn't scared any longer. He'd learned a lot of things last night. Guys like Charlie Dodo and Nick Ball weren't the big brave studs they'd pretended to be. He'd stood up against them once and he could do it again. Sure, it would be rugged and maybe he'd have to take a beating, but it was better than striking down the old woman and having the cops on his tail.

Gradually he became aware of

sounds down below. Mrs. Gonzalez moving about in her kitchen. The odor of garlic and olive oil drifted up to him and made him realize he was hungry.

He was ready to talk with her now. Come to think of it, he could even talk to the cops if he had to.

In a few minutes he'd go down and knock on her door. Maybe he'd sit in the kitchen and gab with her the way Pedro had done.

But not just yet. There was something that he had to do first.

He went to the kitchen and took the bread knife from the drip tray by the sink. Then he went back to his bedroom and dropped down on his knees beside the bureau.

He drew out the purple jacket and slowly, deliberately sliced it into thin ragged strips. He hacked at the collar and sleeves. When he was through he gathered the tatters into a ball and threw them out of the window, hurling them as far away as he could.

He'd never worn the jacket and now he'd never be able to join the Purple Dukes. But somehow he thought Pedro would understand and be glad.

(Continued from page 69)

"What happened to the Dummy?"

"Oh, he took off. The cops came back and said that the other guy would live, but he couldn't talk anymore. Anyway, if he didn't blow the whistle right away, I guess that he won't now. . . ."

Two hours passed by and most of the early crowd had gone when the Dummy came in. I picked up a piece of paper and wrote, *I can't serve you. You know why.*

He nodded, but did not move. Then he gestured toward the pen and paper that I held in my hand.

I gave them to him, and he wrote, *Will he live?* And passed the pad back.

Yes! I wrote. *But he can't speak.*

He took the pad and pen back, and wrote slowly, looking at me all the time. He finished with an exclamation mark and handed the pad to me.

On the pad was written, *Good! Now I'll have someone to talk to!*

He walked to the door, raised his hands over his head, shook them, and left.

two deaths for a dime

by Allen Kim Lang

Barker burst into the Sheriff's Office and headed for the potbellied stove, rubbing together his gloveless hands. "Cold out?" Chief Deputy Sturch asked him.

"Too cold for hell," the Sheriff said.

"*Macbeth.* Act two, Scene three," Sturch said. "The Porter speaking."

"Thus my past rebukes me," Sheriff Barker sighed. "How often did I quote that to your class, Sturch?"

"About three times a winter," his Chief Deputy said. "And three times for *cold as is a dead man's nose.*"

"*The Winter's Tale,*" the Sheriff murmured. He peered at his Deputy. Sturch had his tie off and his collar open; and the man was sweating, though he sat five yards from the stove, next to the drafty window. "You should be home in bed, Sturch."

"That's what Doc Wall said. But who'd watch the office, with me sacked out to home and you

Law enforcement officers throughout the country have essentially the same problems. Sheriff Barker of Poole County had pledged, if elected, to drive out the gamblers, "violators of the State alcoholic beverage laws, purveyors of narcotics, and bribers of police." The murdered Deputy Harkenrider had, so it seemed, been killed by one of these men.

over at the Courthouse, testifying that Billy Nicholls did a murder?" Sturch asked. "What if we'd get another killing in Poole County, and nobody here but one of our wet-eared Deputies?"

"It's true that I need you here," Barker said. "But what you've got looks like flu to me."

"Flu or a virus, Doc Wall said." Sturch reached into his shirt pocket for a tin box of aspirin. He shook two tablets into his palm, pressed them into his mouth, and gulped. "Gah" he said. "These things taste like pilled perdition. But they'll keep me from floating to the ceiling."

"I should get through my statement this morning," the Sheriff said. "I'll be back to relieve you the minute I can."

"Take your time, and do a good job up on that witness-stand, Sheriff," Sturch said. "I liked Win Harkenrider; only growed-up Deputy we had, beside me. I wouldn't like to see the man that killed him get off free. So give Billy Nicholls hell for me, too."

"I'll tell the truth," Sheriff Barker said. "That'll be hell enough for Nicholls. Stay inside, now. Pamper yourself."

"I'll just sit here enjoying my flu and answering the phone till you get done, Sheriff," Sturch said. Barker nodded. He opened his grey uniform mackinaw to trap a bubble of heat to carry with him across to the Courthouse, buttoned up, thrust his hands into his pockets deep, and strode from the office.

As Barker took his seat in the courtroom, Prosecutor Inge was just entering upon his opening statement. He was telling the jurors that, though the State's case against William Allan Nicholls was built almost entirely upon circumstantial evidence, such evidence could constitute the highest and most conclusive sort of proof. Inge promised that he would demonstrate a set of facts that would so well fit together as to prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that Billy Nicholls, acting himself or through agents, had pushed Sheriff's Deputy Wingate Harkenrider from a speeding automobile, with the full intent of causing that young man's death.

Defense lawyer Elisha Giant stood up in his shiny black suit, the one old-timers swore he'd worn to his law-school's 1917 commencement exercises. The venerable broadcloth was unpressed, the shoulders were freckled with dandruff, and the lapels were dusted with fallout from the counsellor's cigars. Giant smiled his slow, wise smile at the jury, welcoming them into the fellowship of reasonable men, He cleared his throat as though about to embark on a day-long

refutation of the Prosecution's claims, then told the Court that he would reserve his statement till the end of the testimony.

The first prosecution witness was Harold Coombs. "Please tell the jury, Mr. Coombs, what you were doing shortly before midnight on Saturday, the eleventh day of January, this year," Inge said.

"I was driving home from my hardware store," Coombs said. "I'd just finished inventory."

"What route did you take, Mr. Coombs?"

"I drive home on State A-40," the witness said. "I live near Goshen, about fifteen miles out of town."

"At what time did you leave your store, Mr. Coombs?"

"At eleven-thirty."

"Please describe the events of your trip home that night, will you?" Inge asked.

Coombs shifted to get comfortable on the witness-chair. "Well, sir; I got about ten miles out, near where the County Line Road crosses A-40. My lights caught something over by the berm on the right. I figured it was a dead fox or a skunk, you know; so I swerved to miss it. The minute I was past, though, I knew the carcass was too big to be a varment. So I backed up to it. When I stopped, I saw it was a man, all bloody and tore up. His hands were tied together with wire behind him. I saw right off he was dead. Nobody could have been chewed up like he was and not be."

"At what time was this, Mr. Coombs?"

"Give or take a minute, eleven forty-five," he said.

"What did you do, once you'd decided that the man was dead?" Inge asked.

Coombs looked down at his fists. "I parked on the berm with my lights shining on the body," he said. "I walked up to where he was lying sprawled on the concrete. I took hold of his shoes — they were the only part that was'nt bloody — and pulled him clear of the roadway."

"Did you recognize the dead man, Mr. Coombs?"

"No, sir," Coombs said. "I knew Win Harkenrider real good, too. He'd bought things at my store to fix up his ma's house, nails and paint. He was tore up bad, now. His face didn't look like much of a face. I didn't relish viewing it. It was Sheriff Barker, later, that told me it was Win Harkenrider I'd found."

"We're getting ahead of ourselves, Mr. Coombs," Inge said. "What did you do after you'd dragged the body off the highway?"

"I lit a red flare I had in the trunk and went to the other side of the road," the witness said.

"I waved down the first car bound for town. I told the driver to go get the Sheriff. He drove off scared. Likely he thought I'd done the killing myself. I stood beside the body in my car-lights, holding my flare. Nobody that passed bothered us. They slowed a little, saw the body, and floor-boarded off."

Giant had nothing to ask this witness.

The next man to take the stand for the prosecution, a State Policeman, testified that at 10 PM he'd patrolled the stretch of A-40 where the body had later been found. He was quite certain that he'd not overlooked a corpse beside the road. Harkenrider's body, it appeared, had been thrown onto the highway between 10 and 11:45 P.M. Again, Giant had no questions.

Sheriff Barker's turn was next. "Sheriff," Inge said, "what was Deputy Wingate Harkenrider working on at the time of his death?"

"Gambling," Barker said. "At the time of my election, I felt that we had a mandate from the voters of Poole County to close down every gambling-joint in our jurisdiction."

Elisha Giant stood. "I would like to remind the witness that he'll not stand for re-election until 1967," he said. "In the interim, I object to his making political announcements from the witness-stand."

"The witness will confine his answers to matters of fact," the Judge said. "Continue, Mr. Prosecutor."

"How did you learn of Deputy Harkenrider's death?" Inge asked.

"My office received an anonymous phone call, perhaps from the motorist that Mr. Coombs stopped. The caller said that there was a dead man on A-40, west. He hung up abruptly," the Sheriff said. "With Chief Deputy Sturch, I drove out to investigate. I found Hal Coombs guarding the body, which he'd pulled off the road to keep it from being hit, and perhaps further defaced, by another car. I identified the body as Deputy Harkenrider from cards in his billfold. He was in civilian clothes."

"Did you examine the surface of the road?" Inge asked.

"Yes, sir," the Sheriff said. "Chief Deputy Sturch and I photographed the body and the skid-marks it had left on the concrete. Again after Doctor Wall, medical examiner and Coroner for Poole County, had appeared to pronounce Harkenrider dead, I had the body removed to the morgue of County Hospital."

The Prosecutor took three photographs from a manila envelope. "Sheriff Barker, can you identify these photos?"

Barker examined both sides of

each picture. "Yes, sir. These are Polaroid flash photographs taken by me at twelve-twenty AM on the twelfth of January. My initials, the time, and the place are marked on the back of each in my handwriting. The photos show the body of Deputy Win Harkenrider and the skidmarks on the concrete, together with a tape-measure laid alongside."

Inge turned toward the bench. "Your Honor, I introduce these photographs, showing the wire-bound body of Deputy Wingate Harkenrider, as Exhibits A-1, A-2, and A-3."

"No objection," defense-lawyer Giant said. The grisly photographs were marked by the bailiff, then circulated among the members of the jury. One of the four women there, after viewing the pictures of the dead Deputy, asked to be brought a glass of water.

The Prosecutor returned to Sheriff Barker. "What events took place after the dead man's body was returned to the city, Sheriff?" he asked.

"I conferred with the medical examiner immediately after receiving a copy of his necropsy-report," Barker said. "I decided that evidence so far gathered supported a suspicion against Mr. Nicholls. I obtained a warrant to search the Defendant's garage."

"Will you please state the results of that search, Sheriff Barker?"

"Yes, sir. The car in the garage was a Cadillac de Ville convertible bearing the license-plate number One - One - One - One," Barker said. "I later confirmed that this automobile was registered to Mr. William Allan Nicholls, owner of the Four Aces nightclub."

"What was the condition of this automobile at the time you examined it?" the Prosecutor asked.

"It was very dusty," Barker said. "It had been driven within the past five hours; that is, at about 11 PM on January eleventh."

"How did you determine this, Sheriff?" Inge asked.

"By the temperature of the engine," Barker said. "I ran tests, once the engine had cooled, and established the rate at which it lost heat."

"What else did you discover in the Defendant's garage, Sheriff?"

"In the back of the convertible, on the floor and on the seat, were some brownish stains," Barker said. "I applied to these stains first a saturated solution of benzidine in glacial acetic acid, followed by a few drops of hydrogen peroxide. The wash was deep blue, a positive test for blood. In addition there was in the garage a coil of wire, similar to the wire we'd found binding

the wrists of the dead man, Win Harkenrider. Microscopic comparison demonstrated that the loose end of the wire in the coil fit perfectly one end of the wire around the victim's wrists; and that the wire had been cut with a tool we'd found in Nicholls' garage, a pair of electrician's side-cutter pliers."

"In your professional opinion as Sheriff of Poole County," Inge said, "could the blood you found on the floor and seat of Nicholls' Cadillac have come from the wrists of Deputy Wingate Harkenrider?"

"Yes, sir," Barker said. "The wrists of the dead man had been so tightly bound with wire that they bled."

"Thank you, Sheriff Barker," the Prosecutor said. "Your witness, Mr. Giant."

Elisha Giant shambled up toward the witness-stand, his hands tucked out of sight in his hip pockets. "Sheriff Barker, what is the name of the test you performed to determine the nature of the stains you claim to have found in the rear section of Mr. Nicholls' car?"

"The benzidine test for occult blood," Barker said.

"Is this test specific for human blood, Sheriff?"

"No, sir. It is positive wherever hemoglobin, or a chemically-similar reducing agent, may be found."

"Would this benzidine test for occult blood prove positive for, say, the stains left by a poorly-wrapped package of hamburger?" Giant asked.

"I believe it would," the Sheriff admitted.

"How about a package of fresh fish?" the defense lawyer asked. "Would fish-juice trigger off this delicate balance of reagents you've described? Would a deep blue color result if a saturated solution of benzidine in glacial acetic acid were washed across fish-squeezings, and then rinsed with hydrogen peroxide?"

"For all I know, sir, it would," Barker said.

"You did not, then, test for human blood," Giant said. "You tested for hamburger, fish, any number of protein groceries, in addition to testing for human blood. Did you not?"

"Yes, sir," Barker said. "A number of substances may give a positive benzidine test."

"Indeed." Giant paused. "Sheriff Barker, how long had you held your present office when your Deputy, Wingate Harkenrider, was found dead?"

"About two months," the Sheriff said. "I had just been elected."

"On what basis, may I ask, were you elected to the Sheriffdom of Poole County?" asked Elisha Giant.

"Objection!" from Inge. "Why does Counsel for the Defense

challenge the results of the late elections? Surely the democratic process is well enough established in these regions that Mr. Giant must allow that its workings do not at this time require justification."

"I wish, your Honor, to show prejudice on the part of this witness against my client," Giant said. "I remind Mr. Inge of Section 208, *Northwestern Reporter,* Page 126; and of Section 114, *Nebraska Reports,* Page 445, where we are reminded that, in weighing the testimony of police officers, greater care should be used than in weighing the testimony of ordinary witnesses because of the natural and uavoidable tendency of police officers to procure and remember with partiality such evidence as would stand against the defendant. I wish further to demonstrate that the witness was dedicated by the promises he made prior to his election to the end of driving my client, William Allan Nicholls, out of Poole County."

"Objection overruled," the Judge said.

"I should like to record my objection," the Prosecutor said.

"The Reporter will make your objection a part of the record; and he will now repeat Defense Counsel's question to the witness, who is instructed to reply," the Judge directed.

The Court Reporter lifted the accordion-folds of his stenographic tape to read, "On what basis, may I ask, were you elected to the Sheriffdom of Poole County?"

"I promised to clean up Dirty Poole. That's what our neighbors call us," Sheriff Barker said.

"Were you not quoted, in the *Poole County Courier,* as having said you would, if elected, put certain persons out of business?" Mr. Giant demanded.

"That quotation is correct," Barker said.

"Who were the persons, Sheriff, of whom you spoke? Whom were you sworn to drive out of business?"

"All professional gamblers, prostitutes, keepers of disorderly houses, violators of the State alcoholic beverage laws, purveyors of narcotics, and bribers of police," Sheriff Barker said.

Giant advanced and banged his fist against the arm of the chair where Barker sat. "Sheriff, I am shrewdly annoyed by your tactic of seizing each question I ask you as opportunity to mount the hustings and campaign for reelection," he said. "I demand that you tell me, by name, who it was you promised to drive from Poole County."

"Boxer Bir and Billy Nicholls, sir," the Sheriff said.

"Exactly!" Giant turned to face the jury. "And now, Sheriff Barker, Billy Nicholls is on trial

for murder. The evidence against him is circumstantial. The discoverer and interpreter of that evidence is the man who swore he'd rid Poole County of Billy Nicholls. You did so swear, did you not, Sheriff Barker?"

Inge was rising. The Judge gestured for him to hold his seat. "Counsel for the defense will observe due caution against abusive treatment of the witness," the Judge said. "The remarks following the word *Exactly* will be expunged from the record, and the jury is instructed to disregard them."

"Thank you, your Honor," Inge said.

"One further question, Sheriff," Elisha Giant said. His voice was very soft. "Prior to your election as Sheriff of Poole County, what was your profession?"

"I was a school-teacher," Barker said.

"What, precisely, did you do for a living prior to November of last year?" Giant persisted.

"I taught English in the local highschool, where I also served as principal."

"No further questions," Giant snapped.

Prosecutor Inge waved aside the invitation to re-examine Sheriff Barker, making it clear to the jury that he felt Giant's challenge to the Sheriff unworthy of attention. Instead, he called Dr. Willard Wall, Coroner and medical examiner. Will Wall, a crewcut redhead who'd come from Army service into the comfortable practice established by his father, was sworn. Inge smiled as Dr. Wall recited his bona fides, acquainting the jury with the friendship that existed between himself and the most popular physician in Poole County. "Dr. Wall," Inge asked, these preliminaries over, "are you trained in the techniques of necropsy, or post-mortem examination?"

"I'm a surgeon and a general practitioner; and maybe a bit of a politician," Wall said. "I'm not a pathologist. I did, however, with an eye to running some day for Coroner, an office my father held for forty years, do some special study in forensic medicine. Shortly after my graduation from medical school, I attended a three-month seminar for medical examiners held at Northwestern University. I subscribe to the two major journals in the field. I have performed several dozen autopsies in the course of my training and practice." Wall grinned. "Of course, Counsellor, you must understand that my patients generally lead healthy lives after I've treated them. This costs me opportunities to perfect my skills as a prosector." Several members of the jury, probably patients of the young doctor,

smiled.

"There is, I understand, a definite procedure for performing this post-mortem examination," Inge said.

"Yes, sir. A standard protocol is followed," Dr. Wall said. "There may be special circumstances dictating special techniques, such as the cause of death, age or sex of the decedent, and so forth. An autopsy, however, must be as carefully performed as any surgical procedure on a living patient, if it is to result in useful findings."

"You followed standard procedures in your examination of the body of Wingate Harkenrider, did you not?" Inge asked.

"Yes, sir."

"What did your necropsy determine, Doctor?" Inge asked. "And Doctor, please phrase your answer in non-technical terms that the jury, the Judge, and I can understand." Another comradely smile was exchanged for the consideration of the four women and eight men in the jury-box.

"I examined the body of Deputy Wingate Harkenrider between four and six-thirty AM on Sunday, the twelfth of January, this year," Dr. Wall said. "I clipped the wires that had bound together his wrists, and gave them to Sheriff Barker for further examination. I discovered that the wrists had been cut so deeply by those wires that several superficial veins had been severed."

"Had this binding with wire occurred before or after Harkenrider's death, Doctor?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Before," the medical examiner said. "Blood-stains on the dead man's skin proved that he had bled severely from the wounds in his wrists. This could have happened, of course, only before death."

"Thank you, Doctor," Inge said. "Please continue."

"There were fractures of the bones of the hands, wrists, arms, shoulders; of the pelvis; of all six long bones of the two legs; and of the neck and skull. No bone of any size, in fact, was undamaged. The spleen and the liver were ruptured, as were other visceral organs."

"Dr. Wall, of all these dreadful injuries, were you able to single out one as the specific cause of death?"

"In my opinion," Wall said, "Sheriff's Deputy Wingate Harkenrider died of a severe cerebral hemorrhage incident upon skull-fractures sustained when he was thrown from a fast-moving automobile."

"Just how can you say that Harkenrider was thrown from a moving vehicle, Doctor?" the Prosecutor asked.

"His hands were bound, which

makes it unlikely that he left the vehicle under his own volition," the Doctor replied. "There was concrete-dust in the surface abrasions of his body. Skid-marks, very similar to those left by rubber tires when an automobile is suddenly stopped, had been left in the roadway by the clothing and the flesh of the decedent. Taking all these factors into account, and bearing in mind the difficulty of reproducing the incident experimentally, as can be done with tire skid-marks, it appears that Deputy Harkenrider was thrown from an automobile going not less than seventy miles an hour."

"Could he have been walking alongside the highway, where he was hit by a passing car?" Inge asked.

"No, sir," Dr. Wall said. "If you'll examine the flash photographs taken by Sheriff Barker, you'll see that the skid-marks left by the body begin dark, and become lighter in the direction in which the body was propelled. This shows that Harkenrider slowed from a fast start. Had he been walking, or standing still, when he was hit, the contact-marks with the pavement would have begun light, and would have become darker and more pronounced as the body picked up speed. This was not the case, as you can see."

"Did you find any other items of interest in the course of your examination of the body, Dr. Wall?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Yes, sir. I did. I reported these other findings to Sheriff Barker; and on the basis of them an arrest was made."

Inge opened a manila folder and placed its clipped-together contents before the witness. "Dr. Wall, will you please identify this document?"

"Yes, sir. This is the Medical Examiner's Report on the autopsy of Deputy Wingate Harkenrider, executed and signed by myself."

"Will you be so good as to read aloud the paragraph you've numbered *thirteen,* which deals with your examination of the alimentary system of the decedent?" Inge asked.

"Yes, sir." Dr. Wall quoted from the document: "Esophagus constricted by dislocation of sixth-seventh cervical vertabrae. Stomach partially distended. Stomach contents consist of some half-liter of but slightly digested food, in which particles of peanuts could be recognized. The whole has the strong odor of beer. Two foreign objects were recovered from these stomach contents; i.e., two five-cent coins, herewith tendered as part of this Report."

"Dr. Wall," Inge said, "please repeat the nature of the foreign objects you found in the stomach

of Wingate Harkenrider."

"Nickles, sir. Two nickles," the Coroner said.

"Have you ever before found coins in the stomach of a person who'd died of violence, Dr. Wall?"

"No, sir."

"If Deputy Harkenrider had swallowed those two coins say, five hours before his death, would they have remained in his stomach those five hours?" Inge asked.

"It's hard to say, sir," Wall said. "It's like a horserace. As a general thing, those nickles would be well along Harkenrider's intestines within five hours. He might have had a medical condition, however, which would slow peristalsis."

"Could he have swallowed those coins three years ago, and have them remain in his stomach until you opened his body?"

"No, sir. No more than a breakfast he ate three years ago would still have been in his stomach," the doctor said.

"Could the dead body have been caused to swallow the two coins after death?"

"Not without surgery or the use of a gastroscope," the medical examiner replied.

"In other words, Doctor, Deputy Harkenrider swallowed those two nickles at the most a few hours before he was pushed from a speeding car to his death. Am I correct in saying this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Doctor Wall. Your witness, Mr. Giant."

Elisha Giant, his black jacket still bunched up behind him like the wings of a slovenly raven, walked up to face the witness. "Dr. Wall," he began, "I hope you'll excuse the ignorance I'll display in the next few minutes. Unlike you, Doctor, I've never opened a human stomach. Books, yes. I'll confess even to having opened an occasional bottle. But never a human stomach. Doctor, the stomach of Wingate Harkenrider promises to be of the utmost importance in helping these ladies and these gentlemen behind me to reach their grave decision regarding the guilt or innocence of my client. I'd like to examine the contents of this stomach, a distasteful duty, in some detail."

"Yes, sir," the medical examiner said.

"Have you heard of the object called a bezoar, Dr. Wall?" Giant asked.

"No, sir."

"It's something I discovered by opening a book," Giant explained. "Occasionally the stomach of an animal will be found to contain a hard object, a sort of gross pearl, formed by accretions around some foreign substance ingested by the beast in the course of its grazing. This is

a bezoar, once thought to be a remedy for every poison. Does this refresh your memory, Dr. Wall?"

"I've not studied veterinary science, Mr. Giant," the doctor said. "In my case, I've never heard of a bezoar being formed in a human being."

"Oh?" Giant picked up a large, red-backed volume. He flipped it open. "This is a copy of Smith, Beamer, Vellios, and Schulz's *Principles of Human Pathology,* Doctor," he said. "I turn to page 806 in this volume to discover that the bezoar is not unknown among humans. There are trichobezoars, for example, found in the innards of girls and women who indulge the deplorable habit of nibbling at their hair-ends. There is the phytobezoar, bane of the man who overeats persimmons, prunes, or celery. I discover here that concretions of shellac may clog the stomachs of bibulous furniture-finishers, which craftsmen sometimes drink the alcohol-based varnish they use. In another book, Dr. Wall, I found that razor-blades and paperclips, tacks and shards of lightbulb-glass, have been fished from the stomachs of amateur magicians, these artifacts having failed to pass along the gastro-intestinal conveyor-belt in the inexorable manner you've described. As you see, Doctor, the literature adduces that some strange furniture indeed has found its home in human stomachs."

"I have never found such things at autopsy," the medical examiner said.

"But you are quite, quite certain, in the light of your negative evidence, that any foreign object entering the stomach will leave it within a few hours," Giant said. He slapped the fat book with his hand. "Despite the testimony of this volume, you are certain that the coins you took from that young man's innards must have been ingested within a few hours of his death. Is that still your contention, Doctor?"

"I must state my opinion from my own knowledge," Wall said. He wiped his brow with his handkerchief, then sandwiched the cloth between his palms to dry them.

"All right," Giant went on. "You opened up Harkenrider to find two coins. How many times before have you found metallic objects in a human stomach?"

"Half a dozen times, sir," Dr. Wall said.

"Indeed?" Giant turned to the jury to display his smile. "But you testified a moment ago, Doctor, that you'd never, before this case, found artifacts in a human stomach."

"No, sir," Dr. Wall said. "Mr. Inge asked me whether I'd ever

recovered coins before. You asked about metallic objects in general."

"Thank you," Giant said. "I stand corrected. What was the nature of the objects you recovered from human stomachs prior to the case at hand?"

"Five chunks of Chinese hardware," Dr. Wall said. "I was at the time practicing surgery with the U.S. Seventh Division."

"I see. Doctor, do you know the significance some persons have placed on those two coins being in the decedent's stomach?"

Inge stood. "Your Honor, the defense is asking this witness to voice an opinion outside his special competence, and to repeat hearsay. I object."

"I sustain your objection, Counsellor."

Giant nodded his head. "Dr. Wall, do you know the name of the man on trial here today?"

Wall looked over to the defendant. "Yes, sir. He is Billy Nicholls."

"Will you repeat again the number and denomination of coins you removed from Harkenrider's body?" Giant asked.

"Nickles, sir. Two nickles," Wall said.

"And I believe in that Report of yours, you said that there was, beside the two nickles, a residue of beer in the dead man's stomachs. May I suggest, Doctor, that Boxer Bir, of the Ringside Club, might be implicated in this case by no greater evidence than this pun against his name? Ten cents' worth of nickles is to William Allan Nicholls as thirty cents' worth of draft beer is to Boxer Bir? No?" Giant was shouting.

"Objection!"

"Mr. Giant, we all wish this to be an orderly trial," the Judge said. "Remarks such as your last might quite properly be reserved for your closing statement. They are grossly out of place as footnotes to this witness's testimony. Objection is sustained; and the Jury will take no notice of Defense Counsel's last question."

"Nothing further, then," Elisha Giant snapped. He turned on his heel and returned to his seat beside Billy Nicholls.

"Does the Prosecution desire a re-direct examination, Mr. Inge?" the Judge asked.

"No, your Honor."

"Then, Doctor Wall, you may step down," the Judge said. He glanced at the big clock over the doorway of the courtroom. "We'll adjourn until two PM," he said.

After lunch, Prosecutor Inge called Miss Kae Kittson, a witness designed to rouse every man in the courtroom from his after-dinner languor. Hers was the architecture blueprinted on filling-station calendars and the gatefolds of magazines-for-men;

but here the structure was realized in three dimensions of tight, blue knitwear. Miss Kittson took the oath and sat, crossing her knees as in the "X" of S-E-X, a word she made her own with every breath. Neither his grey hairs nor his black robe had immunized the Judge against this witness's aura. He stared with the others. With a start, he raised his gavel and dropped it, rebuking a courtroom filled with four-letter thoughts.

Inge stood before the girl. "Miss Kittson, will you please tell the court your occupation?"

"I sing," she said. Her voice had the husky warmth of the best whiskey. "I'm at the Ringside Club. Boxer Bir's place. On weekends I do exotic dances for the three evening shows. You know."

"Indeed, Miss Kittson, I do," the Prosecutor said; "I am an admirer of your art." He took a deep breath. "Miss Kittson, do you know the name of the gentleman sitting next to Mr. Elisha Giant?"

"Oh my, yes," she bubbled. She raised a hand and waved. "Hi, Billy!" Billy Nicholls stared down at his hands. "That's Billy Nicholls," the lady testified.

The Judge leaned down from his bench to speak to the witness. "Miss Kittson, please bear in mind that this is a court of law," he said. "You will address your remarks to me, to the lawyers, and to the jury." He smiled. He looked very ready to wink.

Inge returned to his questioning. "Miss Kittson, were you a friend of the late Sheriff's Deputy Wingate Harkenrider?" he asked.

"Winny and I were great and good friends," Miss Kittson said, pouting with emotion. She patted her eyelids (blue) with a tiny blue handkerchief produced from the blue knit bag she held on her mercifully pink knees.

"At the time of his death," Inge asked, "how long had you known Deputy Harkenrider?"

"I met Winny before he was a deputy," she said. "I remember the day we met, because it was my twenty-third birthday, September fourth. At the Elks. So I knew Winny altogether for . . ." she counted on her fingers ". . . September, October, November, December, and half of January. Four and a half months. Poor boy."

From the rapt look on the eight male faces of the jury, it was evident that those gentlemen thought Harkenrider's violent end a small price to pay for eighteen weeeks with Kae Kittson. "After Mr. Barker took over as Sheriff and appointed Harkenrider as a deputy, did you see him often?" Inge asked.

"We met once or twice a week," she said. "If I had to

work, he'd come to the Ringside Club to watch me dance. You know. We'd have a drink or two afterwards, and maybe he'd drive me home. Or to a movie."

"Did Harkenrider ever speak to you about his job?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Did he ever!" Miss Kittson said. "You'd think Winny was coaching me to be a policeman myself, the way he rambled on about fingerprints and mugshots and bullets. He was real excited about being a deputy. He always had some book with him so he could read it while he waited for me. He was always wanting to show me how to pour plaster into footprints, or pick up a gun without mussing it."

"Did Win Harkenrider ever mention to you cases he was working on, Miss Kittson?" Inge asked.

"He wasn't supposed to," the witness said. "You know. They were trying to get all the evidence and papers ready; and if Mr. Nicholls—I'm sorry, Billy; but I said with my hand on the Bible I'd tell the truth—heard about it he could have hid his books or left the State or something."

"Did you learn anything from Harkenrider concerning an investigation of the business run by Billy Nicholls, Miss Kittson?"

"Winny didn't keep hardly any secrets from me," the girl said. "You got to understand. He was excited about his job, and I was his main one to talk to. So he told me all about getting evidence on Billy Nicholls's rackets, about the gambling, and about that other thing . . ."

"Objection!" Elisha Giant shouted, banging his fist on the table before him.

"Your Honor," Prosecutor Inge said, "I am trying to establish the motive for the murder of Wingate Harkenrider. I hardly think it is possible to divorce the Sheriff's investigation of Nicholls's business from the case now being tried."

"The objection is overruled," the Judge said.

"What did Deputy Harkenrider tell you about Mr. Nicholls?" Inge asked the witness.

"Winny said he had evidence that Billy had killed one of his collectors. You know, a bagman. One of those little men that travels around town and picks up bets and things," Miss Kittson explained. "I suppose it was Granny Shaw that got himself killed. Winny didn't say the name, but nobody ever saw Granny after . . ."

"Miss Kittson," Inge said, "please do not ramble. Just answer the quesetion. Then stop. All right?"

"I'm sorry."

"Did you see Wingate Harkenrider on the evening of Satur-

day, January eleventh?" the Prosecutor asked.

"Oh, yes," she said. "Winny came over to the Ringside Club in civies to hear me sing."

"Did you talk with him that evening?"

The witness brought the exiguous handkerchief back up to her blue eyes. "Not for very long," she said. "He just stopped for my first show. Right afterwards, he said, he had to get back to work on the Nicholls investigation. We only had a minute together."

"When did Harkenrider leave the Ringside Club that night, Miss Kittson?"

"About nine-thirty," she said. "I never saw Winny alive again."

"What was it, Miss Kittson, that Deputy Harkenrider told you concerning Billy Nicholls on that last evening of his life, during the last few minutes he was fated to live?" Inge asked.

The girl looked over toward the table where the defendant sat next to Elisha Grant. "I'm sorry, Billy," she said. "But the last thing Winny told me was that he had evidence about a murder that would send Billy Nicholls to the electric chair."

"Please, my dear, address your remarks to me," Inge said. "Can you remember the exact words Harkenrider used in speaking of Mr. Nicholls?"

"I guess I can." Miss Kittson frowned, twisting the little blue handkerchief. "Winny said, 'Baby, what I found out about Billy Nicholls is gonna make me a corporal and him a corpse."

"Did Deputy Harkenrider elaborate upon that statement, Miss Kittson?"

"We didn't have much time. He had to get back to work," she said. "We talked about some other things. Me and Winny had plans." She applied the rumpled handkerchief to her nose.

"Think now, Miss Kittson, Inge urged her. "Did Harkenrider say anything about having passed any of this supposed evidence against Billy Nicholls on to Sheriff Barker?"

"He said he wanted to wrap up the whole ball of wax first, then take it in and trade it for a set of corporal's chevrons," the witness said.

"On January the eleventh, Deputy Harkenrider told you that he felt he had evidence of sufficient weight to lead to Billy Nicholls's conviction for murder. Is that correct?" Inge asked.

"Yes."

"He left the Ringside Club about nine-thirty, saying that he had to do more work on the Nicholls case. Is that right, Miss Kittson?"

"It is."

"And Wingate Harkenrider was never again seen alive, save by the person or persons who

wired together his wrists and tossed him out of a speeding automobile. Between ten o'clock and eleven forty-five, Deputy Wingate Harkenrider was murdered. Whatever evidence he may have had against Billy Nicholls spilled out with this young man's life-blood on the highway. Thank you, Miss Kittson. Your witness, Mr. Giant."

Elisha Giant eased up to face Kae Kittson. He regarded her for a solemn moment. "I'll have to make a point of getting over to Boxer Bir's place to watch that exotic dance of yours, Miss Kittson," he said. "You're a very lovely girl."

"Thank you, sir."

"I suppose men generally find you attractive," the old lawyer suggested.

"Well," she admitted, "they say so. You know how men are."

"I can imagine," said counsel for the defense. "Miss Kittson, you are presently employed by Boxer Bir, owner of the Ringside Club, as a dancer and singer, is that right?"

"An exotic dancer and a singer. Yes."

"How long have you been singing and dancing exotically for Boxer Bir, Miss Kittson?" Giant asked.

"For about six months."

"Was Boxer Bir the first man in Poole County to employ you, Miss Kittson?" Giant asked. "I mean, as a dancer and singer."

"Oh, no," she said. "This is my home town. I've been singing ever since gradeschool."

"I see. You had, then, worked here previously to your employment at the Ringside Club?"

"Yes; lots of places," Kae Kittson said. "I was even a waitress for a while."

"Where did you work just before you took employment with Boxer Bir, Miss Kittson?"

"At another club," she said.

"At another club in Poole County?" Giant demanded. "What club?"

"At the Four Aces," Miss Kittson said.

"How long had you worked for Billy Nicholls at the Four Aces?"

"Three years."

"I see," Elisha Giant murmured. "For three years, you were an employee of the defendant. Billy Nicholls. Right?"

"Right."

"Why, Miss Kittson, did you leave the Four Aces and go to work for its competitor, Boxer Bir's Ringside Club?"

"Simple," she said. "Boxer saw that people came to hear me sing and see me dance. He wanted the crowds to come to his club instead of to Billy Nicholls's place. So Boxer said he'd give me fifty dollars more a week than Billy did. I just switched gigs."

"Didn't that seem rather dis-

loyal, Miss Kittson?" Giant asked. "After three years, to desert Nicholls and go over to help his chief rival in the nightclub business?"

"Disloyal?" she demanded. "Desert? Good grief, Mr. Giant; for fifty bucks more a week I'd have sung with the Red Army Chorus."

"Kae, did you and Nicholls part amicably?"

"How?"

"Peaceably?"

"Well, he yelled some," she admitted. "But Billy's got considerable mouth to him. He said without me his joint would be Drag City; but I had already promised Boxer Bir I'd sing and dance and everything at the Ringside; so I went."

"Miss Kittson, were you and Billy Nicholls, during any part of those three years you worked in his club, close friends?"

"On payday," she said, "I smiled at him when he handed me my check. We were that close, and no closer."

"You were not, then, lovers?" Giant insisted.

"Me and Billy Nicholls? Yecht," Miss Kittson said.

"When Nicholls dropped you from his Aces show . . ." Giant began.

"Dropped? Me?" Miss Kittson's voice was shrill, reaching those registers where it had rattled the bottles back of the bar. "Who are you claiming dropped who?"

"When you left Nicholls's employment, then," Giant said.

"Yeah. Let's say it that way."

"Did you leave him filled with the wrath of a woman scorned, Miss Kittson?"

"Wrath? Why wrath?" she asked. "Billy was paying me like I was the woman washed his shirts. So I had eyes for that half-cee more a week the Boxer was fixing to pay me. Does that make me Tokyo Rose?"

"Miss Kittson, the State Bureau of Motor Vehicles has a blue Triumph sportscar registered in your name," Giant said. "That automobile's price, according to Poole County Imports, was not less than three thousand dollars. Did you pay for this car from your savings as a singer? As a dancer?"

"No."

"It was given you?" Giant asked. "Such generosity. This three-thousand-dollar powder-blue plaything was a gift from some admirer?"

"Yes." The girl glared at the lawyer.

"From whom?" Giant purred.

"If you must know . . ."

"I must," Giant agreed.

". . . from Billy Nicholls," the girl said.

"I see. From the man who's now on trial for his life," Giant said, pointing back toward Ni-

cholls. "From the man against whom you present such damning testimony." Giant scratched his nose. "Kae Kittson, your charge-account at the Boston Store was for several years the pride of that store's credit department. I understand that you spent an average of four hundred dollars a month there; and that your account was paid on the first of each month by check. Whose check, Miss Kittson?"

"Billy Nicholls's," she said. "Look, Mister. I'm in show-business. I got to have something to show it in. Even if I got to take 'em off when the drum rolls, I got to start out with sharp-looking clothes, don't you see? You don't do an exotic dance in a nice joint wearing a little cotton number you picked off the pipes at Monkey Ward's."

"Miss Kittson, I'd like to repeat a question I wish you to consider again most carefully," Elisha Giant said. "Were you, at any time during the three years you worked at the Four Aces, the mistress of William Allan Nicholls, owner of that club and defendant in this trial?"

"Judge," the girl asked, "do I have to sit here and answer his insults?"

"Answer the question, Miss Kittson," the Judge said.

"I didn't sleep with him," she said.

"Did you possess a key to Nicholls's apartment in the rear of the building occupied by the Four Aces?" Giant asked.

"No."

"Did you have a key to Billy Nichols's Cadillac de Ville convertible, and a key to the garage where that car was kept?"

"No. No keys," she said.

"Persons who claim to have seen you use all three keys I've mentioned, then, are liars?" Giant demanded.

"Objection!" Inge was on his feet. "Your Honor, the defense-counsel is browbeating the witness."

The Judge glared at Elisha Giant. "Counsellor, I will not allow you to go further in this line of inquiry," he said. "I will allow you the greatest latitude in a proper way, but not in this direction."

"Your Honor," Giant said, "I am endeavoring to establish that Miss Kae Kittson entertains a personal animus against the defendant; that she has a very real and very feminine cause for wishing him ill, even to the ultimate of being electrocuted for a murder he did not commit."

"The witness, Mr. Giant, has been sworn," the Judge pointed out. "Her veracity, if not challenged by evidence or the testimony of others—whom you are free to call—is a matter for the jury to decide, making use of the general knowledge they pos-

sess in common with the rest of mankind. You will not pursue the line of questioning you had embarked upon at the moment of Mr. Inge's challenge."

"In that case, your Honor," Giant snapped, "I have no further questions."

"Mr. Inge, have you further witnesses to produce for the People?" the Judge asked.

"No, your Honor."

"Your Honor!" Giant stood. "Counsellor, in view of the lateness of the hour, I believe we should adjourn for the day," the Judge said. "If you want to introduce a new motion, can you as conveniently do so tomorrow morning as this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir." Giant sat down.

"We will reconvene at nine o'clock tomorrow morning," the Judge said. "Members of the jury are admonished not to form or express an opinion or to discuss this case with anyone. Court stands adjourned."

Back in the Sheriff's office, Chief Deputy Sturch was huddled against the potbellied stove, his jacket buttoned tight. "How'd it go, Boss?" he asked Sheriff Barker.

"Giant isn't the man he used to be," Barker said. "They say when a lawyer's got the law on his side, he should pound on the law. When he's got the evidence on his side, he should pound on the evidence. And when a lawyer's got nothing at all on his side, he should pound on the table. That's what Elisha's doing."

"Then it looks like Billy Nicholls is in for a big jolt of public power," Sturch said. He shook a couple of aspirin- tablets into his hand.

"Think you're breaking up your fever?" Baker inquired.

"Guess I am," Sturch said. "Now I'm working on my chill." He pressed the pills into his mouth and swallowed them. "Agh!"

"I never could do that," the Sheriff said.

"Some folks got the knack to, some don't have," Sturch said. "You going back over to the Courthouse tommorrow?"

"I want to see this through, Sturch. This is the first big case since we took over. If you can't handle the office here tomorrow, we'll plant one of our youngsters down by the phone till I'm done across the street."

"I'll stick by," Sturch said.

The Sheriff drummed his fingers against his desktop. "Sturch, do you think you could swallow two nickels the way you got down those two aspirins just now?" he asked.

"Suppose I could," Sturch said. "My throat's kind of queasy right this minute, though. I'd just as soon not be shoving

change through it till it's healed."

"What if you knew you were going to be murdered?" Barker asked. "What if you wanted to swallow those two nickels so that Doc Wall would know when he opened your dead body that a man named Nicholls did the job?"

"I don't know, Sheriff," Sturch said. "I been thinking how hard it must of been for Win to do that trick. I read once that Chinese people used to have a sort of lie-detector. They'd give their suspect a cracker to chew. If he chewed it dry, Whomp! Off went his head. They figured that a man's mouth would be dry as dust if he was guilty and standing in front of the guy with the ax. Same thing about swallowing. A man's throat gets tight and dry when he's scared. It's a wonder Win didn't choke to death."

"Do you know what was in Harkenrider's stomach, along with that ten cents?" Barker asked. "Peanuts. Beer. The kid had eaten some with the nickels, and washed it all down with beer."

"Some folks can swallow dry," Sturch repeated. "Some don't have the knack."

"If Win swallowed those two coins while he was eating peanuts and drinking beer," Barker said, "he didn't know he was about to be murdered."

"It's not an appetizing thing to know," Sturch agreed. "He'd be more likely to run around and yell for help than eat peanuts."

"Right," Sheriff Barker said. "After Win Harkenrider knew that Nicholls was going to kill him, according to Inge, he decided to swallow the coins to tip us off. Since he didn't escape, he must have been in Nicholls's hands at the time. Do you imagine Billy gave our boy a glass of beer to help him swallow the evidence against him?"

"Be pretty stupid of Billy if he did," Sturch said. "And Billy isn't stupid."

"So Win didn't swallow the nickels to lead us to Nicholls," the Sheriff said. "They were a plant. A gimmick. A false lead."

"Suppose somebody poked ten cents down a dead man's throat, just to throw us off the track?" Sturch asked.

"Doc Wall said that couldn't be done," Barker said. "So someone had to coax those coins down Win's throat when he was alive and happy. The last time he was happy and alive, according to her own testimony, was while Win was with Miss Kae Kittson."

"How about the roll of wire in Billy's garage?" Sturch asked. "That positive blood-test on his car?"

"Those could be plants, too," Barker said. "Kae Kittson knew her way around the Four Aces,

including the boss's quarters. She could have gotten in, started the Caddy's engine to warm it up, smeared around chicken-blood in the back seat, and left the roll of wire."

"So what if she did?" Sturch demanded. "If Billy Nicholls didn't bump off Win Harkenrider, he more than likely did the job on Granny Shaw. It doesn't matter much which killing buys Billy his ticket to the chair, does it?"

"Sturch." Sheriff Barker sighed, "I'd like to have you back in my sophomore Civics class."

"I'd just get another 'C,' like last time," Sturch said.

"Don't you recall something called Due Process of Law?" Barker asked. "I'll refresh your memory. Due Process is a Constitutional guarantee against a man's being punished for a crime not proved against him by legal means in a court of law. It's important, Sturch. If Billy Nicholls gets burned for murder, I want to be dammed sure it's for the right murder."

"If Nicholls didn't kill Win Harkenrider, someone went to a lot of fuss to make it seem he did it," Sturch said.

"Falsifying evidence is lots less trouble than taking the rap for murder," Barker said. "If there was any falsifying done, I'll bet our blue-eyed ecdysiast knows more about is than got through her lips today in court."

"You mean Kae Kittson?" Sturch asked. "Nothing's false about that girl, Boss. Or ain't you seen her strip-act?"

"I decline to the question," Sheriff Barker said, grinning at his Chief Deputy. "Let's get Miss Pretty over here, Sturch."

"Mind if I sit here and watch her walk in?" Sturch asked. "Maybe the heat will cure my virus."

"Stay put," Barker said. "I'd feel easier with my wife tonight if I had a chaperone for Kae Kittson." He phoned the Ringside Club, got the girl, and asked her to come to his office as soon as possible.

Kae sauntered into the office and stood hip-shot by the door till Sheriff Barker had helped her off with her mink. Underneath the fur she wore the blue, knit garment that had so taken the fancy of the courtroom earlier in the day. "I drove right over, Mr. Barker," she said. "What's so pressing it postponed a lady's dinner?"

"If you'll answer a few questions, Miss Kittson, I'll buy you Boxer Bir's biggest steak afterwards," the Sheriff said. "Won't you sit down?"

Sturch gallantly shifting her chair, the girl sat next to the Sheriff's desk. Barker scooted his

swivel chair back and stared at his visitor. Sturch sat back by the stove, inhaling the girl like a therapeutic mist. "Miss Kittson," the Sheriff began, "what the devil are you trying to accomplish?"

Kae Kittson scooted further out on the edge of her chair, coyly unaware that the maneuver had hiked the hem of her skirt three inches higher. She leaned toward Sheriff Barker. The hypotenuse of her foreward-bending exposed the rich and rolling country beneath the blue knit. "Winny Harkenrider told me exactly what I said he did." she insisted. "He said, 'What I got on Billy Nicholls will make me a corporal and him a corpse.' "

"Those words will kill Nicholls," Barker said.

"Too bad. They're true words, Sheriff." She leaned even closer, bringing with her a hormone-stirring spice of perfume. "I wouldn't lie about anything so important," she said. Her voice was low and husky.

Barker scooted his swivel chair a foot. "Miss Kittson, do you know what I did for a living before the voters made me Sheriff?" he asked her.

"Of course," she said. "You were principal of the Consolidated Highschool. You've always been an important man in Poole County, Mr. Barker."

"Every day at school, Miss Kittson," he went on, "I met teen-aged darlings who tried to blind me to their inadequacies in Shakespeare or in trigonometry by dazzling me with their anatomy. Those girls, Kae, were no less attractive than you, and some six years younger. My ears are waxed shut against the siren-voice of my endocrine glands. So let's keep our minds on the business at hand, all right? And let's not allow our skirts to creep more than a hand's-breadth above our knees, shall we not?"

Kae Kittson replied with five crisp syllables. She scooched back in her chair and folded her arms across her marvelous chest. "What would happen, smart man, if I told Mr. Inge that you were holding kangaroo court with me?" she demanded.

"Sturch," the Sheriff said, get the Prosecutor at his home. Tell him that Kae Kittson is here, and that she wishes to enter a complaint against me."

"So skip it," the girl said. "Let's have the questions, Sheriff. I'm eager to face that steak."

"Why did you make such a show of stupidity in court?" Barker asked. "You don't lack brains."

"One of us may be dumb, Sheriff," she said. "I don't think it's me."

"Why did you consent to come here this evening?"

"Because you asked me."

"Maybe you're afraid that I may have found out about your plot," Barker said. "Maybe you want to smell out how much I really know."

"You're fishing with a bare hook," Kae said. She stood up. "Get my coat, Barker. We're going to eat rare steak."

"Sit down!" the Sheriff ordered. "You're not leaving this office till you explain why you're trying so hard to get the wrong man electrocuted."

She sat. "Believe me, Sheriff, there's never been a righter man for the electric chair than Billy Allen Nicholls," she said.

"He kicked you out?"

"Don't say that!" Miss Kittson shied her blue purse at the Sheriff's head. Barker ducked. She stood and swung at him. He ducked, just in time to catch her small hard fist against his left eye. "Nobody kicks Kae Kittson out. Nobody!" she screamed.

Barker grabbed the girl's flailing arms pinned them across her chest. Sturch shoved a chair beneath her, and the Sheriff pushed her down to it.

"Handcuffs, Boss?" Sturch inquired, holding out a pair.

"Not her style in hardware," Barker said. He pressed his handkerchief against his left eye. "Now that you've put your brand on me, Miss Kittson, let's return to our catechism. You've answered the first question dramatically enough: Yes, Billy Nicholls kicked you out."

"Does that give you a right to call in and give me the third-degree?" the girl demanded.

Barker grinned as he fingered his swelling eye. "Anyone that sees us would figure you were the one swinging the rubber hose," he said.

"No more questions," she said.

"One more," Barker insisted. "Miss Kittson, did you kill Wingate Harkenrider?"

"If you don't mind," she said, standing, "I'll go now. You can save the price of a steak. My advice to you, Barker, is for you to go back behind your Mussolini desk at the highschool. You're out of your league as a lawman."

"Could be," Barker agreed. He stood to hold the lady's coat. "Still, I'm stuck with the job till the '67 election. So I'd like to know, for the voters, whether you have any theories of why Win Harkenrider swallowed those two nickels."

"Maybe he was playing payphone," she suggested. Sheriff, why don't you go along with the rest of the gang? Win shoved those coins into his stomach to tell Doc Wall who'd done him in. Isn't that clear yet, teacher?"

"I'll accept half of it," Sheriff Barker said. "However those nickles got inside Win, they were meant to pay Billy Nich-

olls's fare to the chair. I don't think Win swallowed 'em with that in mind, though. Miss Kittson, you weren't really fond of Harkenrider, were you?"

"A towheaded kid," she said. "I was his Older Woman. A twenty-three-year-old girl has more than two years on a boy of twenty-one, you know. He was fascinating, my Winny was, He was flattering. He was deadly dull."

"I see." Barker picked up his mackinaw, put on his cap, and took Miss Kittson's furred arm. "I'll walk to your car with you, anyway," he said. "You did drive?"

"Sure," she said. "Don't bother being nice to me, Sheriff. I already don't like you."

"No bother at all," he assured her. He turned back to Sturch. "Get me my brown-glass bottles of benzidine and hydrogen peroxide, will you? In the lab."

Sturch got the bottles. Barker shoved them into his mackinaw pocket. "Back in a minute," he promised.

Kae Kittson's powder-blue Triumph was parked beneath a streetlight near the Courthouse. "This the car Billy Nicholls gave you as a remembrancer?" Barker asked.

"Let up." The girl got into the tiny car, strapped up, and inserted the key.

Sheriff Barker reached across her shoulder and took the key for himself. "You know," he said, "if Win Harkenrider didn't take that last trip in Nicholls's Caddy convertible, he rode with someone else, didn't he?"

"Damn it, Sheriff," Miss Kittson said. "If you don't let me drive out of here, I swear I'll call a cop."

"In a moment," Barker said. "The most likely vehicle, if we suppose the Cadillac not to have been used, is this one. I'd like your permission to do a simple test." He walked to the other side of the sportscar and opened the door. "The way I see it," he said, "is that you coaxed Win Harkenrider to swallow those two nickels. Friendly bet, eh? The game was Boxer Bir's, but only you could persuade Win to wash down two nickels, laughing as he did it, with a beer. Right?"

"Your dime this time," she said. "Rattle on, teacher."

"Then Boxer Bir, having planted evidence inside a cop that would convict Billy Nicholls of murder, slugged Win. He carried him out to this car. He bound the kid's wrists with wire, and tossed him up here, on the bucket seat next to you." Barker took the brown-glass bottles from his pocket. "You drove. Bir hunched up behind the two of you on the jump-seat. Now if I'm right about this, there'll

be blood-stains here, where Win's wire-cut wrists pressed against the seat."

"You won't find anything."

"In that case, I'll apologize and beg you to accept my offer of a steak and a drink," Barker said. "Let me continue, though. You did the driving, with Bir perched behind you and poor knocked-out Win Harkenrider. When you got your speed up to seventy, out on A-40, and once there were no other car-lights in sight, Boxer got to work. He slipped Win's seatbelt off, opened the door, and booted the kid off onto the dark concrete."

"Why, Sheriff?" the girl asked. "That's a mean prank to play on a guy."

"Your motive was clear enough. Nicholls had kicked you out; you didn't give a damn for Win; and Win gave you a way to get Billy Nicholls killed by the State," the Sheriff said.

"Why was Boxer playing ball?"

"Because you reported to him what Win had told you, Kae; just what you said in court today, with one minor change. What Win really said was, 'Baby, what I found out about Boxer Bir will make me a corporal and him a corpse.' Good thinking?"

Kae's right hand flashed to the glove-compartment. Barker's big fist had closed over the latch before she reached it. He opened the door and pocketed the little automatic. "If you'd shot me, Miss Kittson, you'd have missed today's chemistry lesson," he said.

The Sheriff took a handkerchief from his pocket, moistened it with the vinegar-stinking benzidine-in-acetic-acid solution, and mopped the back of the seat next to the girl. "If Win Harkenrider sat here bleeding," he said, "something would have got on the seat. No matter how well you washed off the stains, there'd be enough blood left in the leather to show up in this test." He poured a few drops of hydrogen peroxide over the handkerchief. Blue-green bubbles frothed up. "Looks like we'll have to postpone that rare steak for a few years, Miss Kittson," Barker said. "I'm sure you wouldn't care for red meat now, anyway."

"It was Boxer's idea," Kae Kittson said, huddled in her bucket seat. "So I got mixed in. Sheriff Barker, my career is being a patsy to a long line of men."

"Don't worry, Miss Kittson," Barker said, reaching over to unsnap her seatbelt. "No men will take advantage of you at the State Prison for Women."

suicide?

by E. X. Ferrars

It was Jimmie Marston, aged seven, who first saw the two eyes of light peering through the bushes at the mouth of the old quarry. Jimmie was used to thinking of the quarry as his own private place and went forward jealously to investigate.

He walked very softly, for there was something pretty queer, he thought, about a car that had been left with its lights on at the bottom of an old cart track when, after all, it was barely dusk.

But although he was cautious, he was not really scared and he was beside the car and had had a good look at what crouched motionless at the wheel before blind terror exploded in his mind.

Running, screaming, he made for home and what his parents were able to make of the story that he told them sent his father running to the quarry, then on, almost as shaken as his son, to

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Elizabeth Ferrars (whose name isn't Elizabeth Ferrars. . . .) is the author of more than twenty novels including THE DECAYED GENTLEWOMAN, THE WANDERING WIDOWS, ALIBI FOR A WITCH, HUNT THE TORTOISE, etc. She was born in Burma, and educated at what she later described as "one of the few co-educational boarding schools in England". . . .

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the police. Some woman, he told Sergeant Buller, had driven her car down the old road into the quarry back of his cottage and nearly hacked her head off.

Only an hour earlier, in the nearby town, Bertram Wilde, a solicitor, had come to the police station to report the disappearance of his wife. He had begun by apologising distractedly for troubling the police when perhaps she would walk in at any moment, but she had been ill with flu, he had explained, and suffering badly from the depression that so often goes with it.

"That's really why I'm so worried," he had said. "She'd still a temperature when I left the house this morning and I'm sure she'd no intention of getting up, yet when I came home to cook some lunch for her, since we've no domestic help now, she'd gone.

"And she must have gone quite soon after I left, because Dr. James tells me he called to see her about 10 o'clock and couldn't get any answer. And what makes the situation particularly strange and alarming is that she—she appears not to have dressed. She'd taken her fur coat, but apart from that I realy believe she's wearing only her nightgown and bedroom slippers."

A nightgown, slippers and a fur coat, all heavily stained with blood, were what the dead woman in the quarry was wearing.

She had left a note for her husband in the car. It said, "I'm so sorry, Bertie, I can't help myself. You've always been so good to me, but it doesn't make any difference."

So there you were, said Sergeant Buller, reporting to Inspector Wylie, a plain case of doing herself in, poor creature, while the balance of her mind was disturbed.

To Inspector Wylie the case did not seem as plain as all that. He could not see why Jennifer Wilde should have driven to the quarry and cut her throat there when she had a comfortable gas oven handy. Also he distrusted suicide notes written on small scraps of paper.

"I like them better when they've a recognisable beginning, middle and end," he said. "This could have been torn out of a letter about something quite different. Then there are those car lights. Why were they on? It was daylight when she got to the quarry, wasn't it?"

After some thought he added, "I think I'll go and talk to that doctor."

He did not get much from Dr. James, except a confirmation that Mrs. Wilde had been suffering from a virus infection and that it had brought on

a severe depression. However, from other people Wylie soon learned a number of interesting things, which happened to be mainly about Dr. James.

A young and attractive man, he had been seen about with Jennifer Wilde often enough to cause scandal, had always visited her uncommonly often when she was ill, or supposed to be ill, and this had usually been when her husband was at his office.

Her suicide, a friend of hers suggested to Wylie, had probably been caused by the strain of the situation. Another friend thought that she had made up her mind to leave her husband and then had suddenly found that Dr. James had no intention of ruining his career on her account.

Somewhat suspicious of the doctor, who struck Wylie as a smooth but fairly ruthless character, who might not find it difficult to take the life of a woman who had grown troublesome, the detective went on to see Bertram Wilde.

The bereaved husband, a nervous, stooping man of fifty, seemed dazed, as was only to be expected, wrung his hands and said to Wylie: "I ought never to have married her. I wanted her to be happy. I thought I could make her happy, but I ought to have known it couldn't work. Poor Jennifer, I was too old for her, I ought to have known it."

Wylie thought that the solicitor knew all about Dr. James but that the shock of his loss had made him incapable for the present of feeling vengefulness or even anger. He had shown no sign of suspecting the doctor of murder. But nor had the doctor attempted to direct suspicion at the husband. Uncertain what he thought, Wylie went back to worrying about the lights on the car.

"Why did she leave them on?" he asked Buller again. "Why did she turn them on at all? No fog that morning, was there?"

"Well, why would a murderer go and leave the lights on?" Buller asked. "You'd think it's the last thing he'd do."

"That's right," said Wylie. "Suppose, for instance, it was the doctor who killed her and suppose he wanted her to disappear till we couldn't tell by hours, or even days, how long she'd been dead, he might have dumped her in the car, driven it into his own garage and waited till dusk to drive it away to the quarry.

"He'd have turned the lights on then all right, sooner than risk being stopped for driving without them, but how could he ever have managed to forget to

turn them off? If he'd looked back over his shoulder even once when he was leaving, he'd have seen them shining like beacons. The same with the husband, if he'd done it during the night before. . . ."

Wylie stopped abruptly. He had just thought of the answer to his question. It is quite easy to forget to turn off the lights of a car when they have become practically invisible.

Next day the dead woman's husband was arrested for the murder of his wife. He seemed almost glad by then to tell how he had caught her writing the letter of farewell to him from which he had torn the supposed suicide note and how he had killed her. But the problem of the lights clearly puzzled him as much as it had puzzled Wylie.

Bertram Wilde had started the drive to the quarry in the darkness of the early morning and had not noticed, as the sun rose, that the lights on the car had paled to nothing, had forgotten that he had ever switched them on and so had left them to signal brightly, with the return of darkness, to Jimmie Marston.

A SPECIAL KIND OF PRIVATE EYE

An investigative office set up in Philadelphia by three propery and casualty insurance trade associations, armed with an index of fraudulent claimants and complete file of racket methods, has participated in the successful prosecution of more than thirty persons and the indictment of thirty others. The Claims Bureau, with its investigations carried out by two former FBI agents, is particularly concerned with auto fraud cases. They also investigate cases of persons who are addicted to falling down in stores and restaurants (here there is often a pattern of deliberate accidents); recently a Pittsburgh couple, who had claimed and collected for nine "accidents" over a two-year period, were caught up with thanks to the Bureau.

Another area of investigation is that involving the presence of "foreign matter" in food or in drink. A bug in a bottle of soda or in a can of soup, can result in a lawsuit or in claims of damages. The Bureau is interested in finding patterns of fraud in these cases where there is reason to believe that the "foreign matter" didn't just happen. . .

the square root of death

by Ed Lacy

Sheriff Lew Brandy is typical of the small town cops I've known in my 'career' as a fact crime writer. Plodding, without much imagination or ambition — but men like Brandy are long on common sense. They're also simple to the extent that (like all of us) they're pleased to see their names in print, no matter how larded the puff article.

Now, sitting beside Lew in the Harbor's only police car as he drove with expert ease through the desolate country — a homely, rough man running to middle-aged fat — I was grateful he'd let me in on the ground floor. I'd merely stopped to shout hello as I was passing through 'his' village.

Lew said in the thin, shrill voice — which was a comical contrast to his burly size. "Harry Parks, the caretaker, phoned in. A Dr. Frank Moore was shot dead early this morning. Ever hear of the doc?"

"No. Important joker?"

"I never heard of him, either, but supposed to be a big time scientist. This is a shooting club

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Often, underestimating the law enforcement officer concerned, we have a tendency to murmur something bright about the quality of Justice varying according to the capabilities of whomsoever administers it. Ed Lacy, the author of more than a dozen published novels in this field, shows how unwise it is to underestimate "the small town cop". . . .

— almost kind of a pun," Lew said with a grin showing his crooked teeth. "But according to Harry it's straight murder, not any accident. First real murder case I've had. This used to be the Barth Estate, an old run-down mansion with an oddball millionaire living by himself — not even a cook or maid. Anyway, when he died — years ago — the empty place went to hell — some sort of court wrangle over the estate. Then about a half a dozen years ago, six men bought the place as their private shooting and fishing club. All rich men, of course."

There was a faint note of worry in Lew's voice: tangling with wealthy men can be dangerous to the job-tenure of any village sheriff. "Harbor men?" I asked.

"Nope, some of the men are scientists from this here atomic lab the government built out on the Point. The rest are owners of the big estates surrounding the Harbor."

"Atomic lab — think it's a spy case?"

Brandy shrugged his thick shoulders. "Naw. First off, the real famous scientist, a Dr. Ward Henry, is in Europe attending some international conference. From what Harry told me on the phone seems this Doc Moore found a sort of . . .relic . . . in the house last night. Something they all had been hunting around for. Guess that's the motive."

"A relic?"

"Yeah, some kind of old dagger. That's all I know — they found the Doc shot to death in his room, the dagger missing."

"Have you called the County Police, Lew?"

"Not yet," Brandy said slowly. "The estate is within Harbor limits — the case is mine."

We turned into a dirt road and I heard the sound of waves, smelt the salt in the air long before we saw the house. It was hardly a mansion but a rambling frame house two floors high — with an idiotic castle-like tower at one end. It still looked run-down. Behind it stood the dunes and a wild beach, probably fine for surf casting. To one side there was a skeet range; four fancy cars and a shabby pick-up truck were parked in front of the house.

The interior wasn't at all shabby, but very comfortable. Furnished with old heavy leather chairs, a few modern contemporary pieces, an expensive TV and stereo set which cost more than Lew made in a half a year — the whole place was warm as the giant fireplace, and very much a *man's* place.

Five men were waiting for us.

Harry Parks, the caretaker, reminded me of Sheriff Brandy;

a large man with thick grey hair, bad teeth crowding his mouth; clothes neat but rough. The other four men were all in their fifties and had one thing in common: their hunting clothes were expensive — really expensive. Harry introduced them quickly:

Bill Winston, a pudgy little man whose fat face had once been handsome — a self-made clothing manufacturer.

A Dr. Lawrence Bloom, tall and wiry, with a sharp, tense face; quick to explain he wasn't a medical doctor, but an industrial chemist.

Pat Harris, electrical engineer: a powerful built man with a cheerful face — the youngest man there, probably 50.

Dr. Oliver Swanston, a medical research man — lean and sour looking, suspicious eyes.

Dr. Swanston took us upstairs to the blood-spattered bed. Dr. Moore, a thin baldy with the busted nose of an old fighter — had been shot through the heart by a 30-30 rifle at close range. The rifle was on the bloody floor. For a skinny guy, Moore certainly had bled a lot.

Glancing at the corpse, Swanston said, "We were awakened at 5:30 a.m by the sound of a shot, found poor Frank as you see him. Quite dead, of course."

"Anybody touched the gun?" Lew asked.

"I hardly think it matters much — I mean about prints. This is a rifle from the gun rack downstairs — we've probably all handled it at some time over the weekend."

"I'm locking the room, don't want anybody in here," Lew told him. "Let's get downstairs."

"Naturally we'll cooperate in any way we can, Sheriff," Dr. Swanston said, curtly.

We returned to the others sitting before the fireplace. With a forced grin, Pat Harris, the electrical engineer said, "When does the third degree start? Sheriff, why don't you and your deputy sit down and let me fill you in with the details of this . . . mess?"

When I explained I was a magazine writer, they were all unhappy. Winston said, "Sheriff, shouldn't have brought a reporter here. We don't want any publicity . . . all responsible business men who. . ."

"Don't worry about publicity," Lew grunted. "This is a murder —not a clam bake. No article will be written without my say-so. Now, Mr. Harris, you start filling me in — from the beginning."

"Yes, sir, from the top," Pat Haris said. "Being interested in shooting, some time ago we each put up $14,000, purchased this place. Generally we get together weekends. About — oh, almost

two years ago, while repairing a wall, we happened upon some letters of the former owner, Mr. Barth, who it seemed was a connoisseur of antiques. The papers we found stated his high excitement upon buying Cortez's dagger. As you can see, the weapon has traveled a long way from Mexico, in both time and distance."

"Aha," Lew grunted. Smugly, I wondered if he knew who Cortez had been. "How much was this here dagger worth?"

"It has material value, the handle is studded with precious stones. But needless to add, as a colector's item . . . it's priceless. From the letters we were certain the dagger was still hidden within the house. Whenever we were bored, we hunted for it. Whoever found it would keep it. Hank, who has been abroad for several months now, was especially keen on adding it to his collection of arms. We. . . ."

"What made you think the knife was still here?" Lew cut in. "Barth died over 20 years ago."

Dr. Bloom said, "That's beside the point, Sheriff. Frank found the dagger last night — under the cellar floor. A fascinating exhibition of. . . ."

"Of sheer nonsense," Dr. Swanston said abruptly. "I refuse to consider his hocus-pocus anything but pure luck. As I told him last night. . . ."

"Fellows," Mr. Winston put in gently, "This is hardly the time for one of your learned bull sessions. Let Pat finish giving Sheriff Brandy all the details."

The electrical engineer nodded. "Right, Bill." Then he told Lew, "The quest for the dagger was a game we played from time to time, especially on rainy weekends. We weren't . . . uh . . . fanatics about it, understand, but we studied building plans, often held slightly drunken discussions as to where a man like Barth — each of us having our own conception of the man — would hide anything. True, we all wanted the dagger for our own collection, but I refuse to believe any of us would murder for it or. . . ."

"Now stop that line of talk," Dr. Swanston cut in. "This was obviously the work of an intruder. Any number of antique dealers throughout the world would like to have the dagger. Nor should we rule out the chance it was a petty housebreaker who happened to stumble into poor Frank's room. Nor do we know what personal enemies Frank might have. . . ."

Brandy pointed a thick finger at the caretaker. "Harry, can you give me a rundown on what happened here? Start with the last time the deceased was seen alive. Now, when would that

be?"

"Well, it was about . . . nine, last night, when Dr. Moore found the knife, using a divining rod. Tell you, Lew, it was real uncanny the way that rod moved — pointed directly at this spot on the floor like it was nodding at it.'

"A divining rod?" Lew repeated, shrilly. "One of these bent twigs, nuts claim they can find water with? I thought the deceased was a scientist?"

Dr. Swanston laughed — a short, brittle, bark. "Very well put, Mr. Sheriff. Frank did indeed behave like a ignorant clod — using a dowsing rod, of all things!"

"But, Ollie, it worked," Dr. Bloom said, in a mild voice.

"Exactly!" Pat Harris added. "You see, Sheriff, Frank always was full of curiosity. As he said, about 80% of the time these old water diviners actually *found* water! Last night that old coat hanger Frank was using surely pointed out the dagger's hiding place."

"How any one of the slightest scientific bent can believe such utter nonsense, is beyond my understanding," Swanston said.

"Ollie, you were on that same kick last night," Pat said. I thought Frank's explanation was highly scientific." He turned to Lew and myself. "Science is in the dark on many, many things. Now it is a fact that all matter — including the body — gives off radiation. As Frank carefully explained, for some reason still unknown to science — and it may be due to the fact that thoughts give out a source of energy and radiation, too — when a person is holding a delicately balanced rod, or a pendulum, and thinking of . . . say, water, when he is actually near water the electrical discharge, or wave length of his aura radiation, changes. This causes the muscles of the hand to sweat, or actually contract, in turn causing the rod to move. In short, it has nothing to do with any supernatural quality in the rod."

"Good Lord, Pat, as an engineer, how can you believe such damn nonsense?" Swanston asked. "Really, I. . ."

The engineer laughed. "As Frank told you last night, with all your knowledge medical men still can not adequately explain the miracle of birth! As the great Carrel said, '. . . we willingly believe that facts which cannot be explained by current theories, do not exist.' I. . ."

"Hold everything," Brandy cut in. "Last night Dr. Moore found the dagger; then what happened?"

"Naturally we were excited about finding it," Winston, the manufacturer, said. "It was covered with layers of dust and dirt,

but there was no doubting it was the Cortez dagger. Frank wrapped it in a handkerchief, took it up to his room. You see, Sheriff, with rare objects, one must be very careful in cleaning and handling them. He was going to take it to his lab today. Then all the scientific brains here, which left out myself and Harry, held a furious debate about energy and human radiation, things far over my head. I never even finished high school, I regret to say. It was nearly midnight when we finally retired to our rooms. Next I was awaked by the sound of a shot. I rushed out into the upstairs hall — it was still dark — and we met the others. We were all there, except Frank. We went to his room . . well, he was dead."

Brandy nodded. "Okay, that was 5:30 a.m. Then what did you do?"

"Dressed and ran out of the house," Bloom told him, "to find the killer, or killers. We split up, each covering a part of the ground and woods. It was about 8 a.m. when I returned. Bill had come in a few minutes before. Then Harry showed. I suggested he phone you. It was about 8:30 a.m. before Pat and Ollie returned. In the meantime, Bill and I went to Frank's room, looked for the dagger — it was missing."

"Why did you go to his room?" Lew asked.

Bloom shrugged. "I don't really know. I suppose we each realized the dagger had to be the motive. At least I was sure of it. I knew Frank better than the others. He lived a quiet life — few friends, no women — his wife had died several years ago. Frank was a dedicated man, lived only for his work."

Brandy sighed again. "When you went to look for the killer, were you armed?"

"Certainly, Dr. Swanston said. "Hardly expect us to chase a killer unarmed. We took guns from the racks."

"During the night, did any of you hear a noise, like somebody taking the murder weapon from the racks?"

As they shook their heads, the caretaker said, "That's what puzzles me, Lew. You know I've always been a light sleeper. My bed is down here, off this room. I didn't hear a thing. The doors and windows weren't locked, but I would have heard a door opening, or the gun being removed from the rack."

"Last night, did you go to your rooms at the same time?"

"Yes," Bloom said, "give or take a minute. We finished our drinks and retired — sober. Sheriff, while I know it's your job to suspect us, I must say it's preposterous to think any one of us would do Frank in, much

as we wanted the dagger. Collecting antiques is merely a hobby with us, not a passion."

Brandy rubbed his fat nose, asked where the phone was. The caretaker took him into the kitchen. I followed. When the kitchen door closed, Lew whispered, "Harry, you're a Harbor man, one of us, were all those jokers telling the truth? You suspect any of them?"

"No, I don't suspect them. They told it straight. After Doc Moore found the dagger, they had this long argument about dowsing rods, lots of scientific talk. I couldn't understand. I went to my bed, but I heard them gassing. Then, when they went upstairs, I got up to clean the glasses, went back to the sack."

Brandy phoned his office, telling his one deputy to get Dr. Carr out to the house. I gathered Carr was the Harbor's single doctor, therefore also the Coroner.

Lew stared at the phone as he put it down. I knew what he was thinking — he'd have to call in County Homicide, admit the case was too big for him. For a few minutes there was only silence in the kitchen, then Harry asked, "I was making sandwiches when you drove up, Lew. Be okay if I serve lunch? We ain't eaten since last night."

Lew nodded. When Harry left with a tray of food, I said, "Lew, you'd best call the FBI, along with the County. You'll need plenty of expert police lab work on this. Half the time I didn't even know what those guys were talking about. You're in over your head here."

"I don't think so. I would be if I was discussing science with 'em, but crime is *my* field. I have a working motive, the weapon, a group of suspects . . . and the damn silly fact every one of them left the scene of the crime, meaning the killer had plenty of time to hide the best piece of evidence — the dagger! Of course, I could have them all searched, shake down their homes. . . ."

His voice died. Again, I could almost read his mind: if he did investigate them and didn't come up with stand-up evidence, Lew'd have four influential wheels on his back. For many seconds Lew just stood there, lost in thought, rubbing his thick fingers together as if they were sticky.

"What's next?" I finally asked. There wasn't a thing Lew could do but yell for County help.

"I don't know, exactly. Way I see it, no great rush. True, I could snoop around Doc Moore's house, learn his friends and enemies. Possible the dagger had nothing to do with the killing. And Doc Carr can come up with

a clue when he does the autopsy. But my best hunch says the murderer is one of the five men in this house, so I think I'll waste an hour or so around here, see what breaks. Let's go back to the others."

I was slightly astonished: police officers like Brandy are the dogged type, solve crime by digging away — never by going for cute. To me there seemed a lot of big questions to be answered. Like: Why hadn't the killer used the dagger on Moore instead of awakening the whole house with a gun blast? Or . . . ?

I followed Lew into the living room where the five men were sitting around the rough table, which probably doubled in brass for poker games, too, slowly eating thick roast beef sandwiches, sipping mugs of coffee. A democratic group — Harry Parks was eating with his employers. They offered us sandwiches and to my surprise, Lew accepted.

We sat around like one happy family, the only sounds being those of chewing, until Dr. Swanston asked, "Sheriff, I realize we're sure to be involved in some . . . eh . . . red tape, but can you possibly give me an idea how long all this will take? I'm due to read a paper in San Francisco next week."

"Can't set no timetable on a murder," Brandy told him. "But nobody leaves this house, much less the Harbor, until I say so. Another thing; Harry, take the ammo out of every gun in the house, including pistols, and lock the shells and guns in a closet. But don't touch the murder gun. Any guns missing, let me know," Lew added, reaching for another sandwich.

Harry nodded: mouth full of rare roast beef.

Bill Winston, the clothing man, said, "Sheriff, I hope you're not responsible for setting men's styles back an entire season. Which will be the case, if I don't reach Rome for the Spring fashion shows this week. I . . ." Winston suddenly coughed. "Bet I caught a cold running around in the morning dampness. Ollie, want to use a divining rod to see if I have the germs?" He winked at the others.

"Please, don't spoil my meal with such bunk," Dr. Swanston said, glaring over his steaming coffee mug.

"Of course, while I understood little of the scientific big words being tossed around last night," Winston went on, "didn't Frank claim this human aura business could be used to detect illness?"

"That's right," Bloom told him. "Frank said a diseased organ gives out a different radiation length from a healthy one, and in time the study of the

aura will be more important than the X-ray for every doctor."

"Merely a wild theory!" Swanston said, annoyed.

"And as Frank told you last night, flying was a wild theory before the Wright brothers, and 30 years ago few scientists believed in atomic energy," Pat Harris said, baiting the doctor.

Winston lit a cigar, held one out to Brandy, who turned it down. Lighting his rope, the manufacturer said, "Perhaps the good Sheriff ought to add a divining rod to his police equipment. It found the dagger, perhaps it can point out the killer."

"It probably could, if the killer was in this room," Harris said, opening his hunting vest, lighting his pipe. "I'm willing to submit to a 'murder dowsing.'"

"Me, too," Winston added, "if it would speed up the investigation. Let's try it."

Brandy said, "Might be an idea. Anybody got a bent twig?"

I couldn't believe my big ears — Lew was grasping at wild straws! Lew was a 'good' cop and I was puzzled at the lengths he was going to avoid calling in the County police. Lew's being a glory hound was a new side of him I'd never seen before.

"Come now, this is sheer nonsense," Swanston said. "You'd be laughed out of any court in the land with that sort of evidence."

"Perhaps, "Brandy said, opening his coat, "letting out a notch in his wide belt with a sigh — or it could have been a small belch. "But you fellows claim it located the dagger, and if it narrows the list of suspects, be a help, save time. Where's the dowsing twig Dr. Moore used last night?"

"Not a stick but a metal hanger," Winston said. "I'm for trying it — be interesting if nothing else."

Bloom stood up. I'll get a hanger."

"I, for one, will not submit to any such damned foolishness!" Swanston announced, pushing his coffee mug away.

"Purely as a scientific experiment, I fail to see what possible harm it can do," Pat Harris said. "I'm for it."

Harry, who had been removing the guns from the racks, taking out the shells, called from across the room, "All the guns are here, except for the one upstairs. Okay, if I lock 'em in the tool chest, Lew?"

"Fine."

Bloom, the chemist, brought an ordinary wire hanger from the closet, handed it to Lew. "The idea is to hold it rigidly between your hands, but perfectly balanced, so it has freedom of motion."

Holding the ends of the hanger in his big hands, Brandy asked, "You mean all I do is point the hook — at each of you?"

Harris, the electrical engineer, reached over to touch the hanger. "Haven't balanced it yet. There — now you have it. Remember, your mind must be concentrating on only one thing — *the killer.*"

Lew stood up. "Let's give it a whirl. Rest of you form a half-circle in front of me. You too, Harry."

"I will take no part in this idiotic exercise," Dr. Swanston said. "You'll be consulting a crystal ball next!"

"That's up to you, Doctor. I'm not forcing anybody to do this," Lew said slowly. "But I might as well tell you — everybody is going to remain here until Dr. Carr, of the Harbor, performs an autopsy on the corpse, and my deputy dusts Dr. Moore's room for prints. Going to take several hours at least."

The others formed a rough circle before Brandy. He motioned to me, "Join the line."

"Me?"

"Why not?" Brandy asked. "If the hanger points at you, be proof it's a phony."

"Well . . ." I began, then shut up, joined the others. I found myself shaking a little. Harry Parks was sweating, the others seemed casual but I sensed their tenseness under everything.

Dr. Swanston suddenly stood up — a weary movement. "I suppose I'll join this childish exhibition. You'll be reading tea leaves next, Sheriff."

Pat Harris reached out and barely touched the hanger with the tip of his finger. It moved. "Very good, Sheriff, you have the touch of an old water diviner." He tapped the hanger back to a horizontal position. "I think we're ready."

The silence in the room was so clear I could hear two things: the sound of the waves on the beach outside . . . and the fast beat of my heart. Brandy walked to within a few inches of Harry Parks, pointed the hanger at him. It didn't move. Harry grinned weakly.

Lew pointed it at me. My heart jumped: the hanger didn't. Then he pointed it at Winston, at Harris, Bloom. Swanston was the last one — damn if the hanger didn't dip sharply, like it was fingering the doctor!

The others gasped; Swanston went pale, tried to say something but obviously his mouth was cotton-dry. Lew held the hanger up higher, and again the hook dipped toward Swanston. The doctor jumped back, seemed about to run. Dropping the hanger Lew moved with cat-

speed, grabbed Swanston by his hunting vest. "Doc, don't try anything foolish!"

"I-I refuse to indulge in this . . . I demand a. . . !"

"Shut up!" Brandy grunted. "Hold your hands over your head." He quickly frisked the doctor. "Give me your vest."

"I've had enough of this damn nonsense! I demand a. . . "

"Damnit, stop talking and take off your vest!" Brandy said, stepping back as if covering the rest of us.

Swanston removed his red vest and tossed it at Lew. The Sheriff felt of it, suddenly pulled out his pen knife, started ripping the vest apart. A moment later he held up four little metal bars, about an inch long and a quarter of an inch in thickness.

"What are those?" Swanston asked.

Brandy lifted one with the tip of his knife. "Magnets. You've been framed, Doc. Somebody, figuring we'd try this dowsing bit, sewed magnets into your clothing. Harry, look in your kitchen, should find a couple of pot-holders missing, or sewed up." Lew moved toward Bill Winston. "I'm booking you on suspicion of murder, sir."

"Me?" Winston yelled, his cigar falling from his lips. "Are you crazy? What do I know about magnets and radiation, stuff like that? Harry and I are the only ones who couldn't be in on all this, never had a college education like the others!"

"Nope, you've convicted yourself, Mr. Winston. These magnets were *expertly* sewn into the vest lining. Calls for a tailor's skill, and you're the *only* one here with that!"

Winston stared at Brandy with startled, big eyes, then fainted.

Later in the afternoon, after Winston had finally confessed, even dug up the dagger for Brandy, Lew put his big feet up on his old office desk, yawned, told me, "Well, writer, not bad for a hick sheriff — solving a murder in less than a day."

"Come off it, Lew, tell me true: didn't you suspect Winston from the jump?"

"Yes and no. I knew he was a big collector, with Picassos and other valuable paintings in his house. His insurance company wrote me that years ago, when Winston first moved out here. Of course, the others could have been collecting nuts, too, for all I knew. Main thing was, I was darn certain it wasn't the work of an outsider. The gun told me that."

"The gun — how?"

"If you're busting into a house and expect to use a gun, you come *armed*. Also, Harry *is* a light sleeper, would have heard

an intruder. Another thing: supposing it had been an unarmed house breaker who was surprised by Dr. Moore? He would have tried to clout the Doc with a chair or something, or even used the dagger. But Winston *had* to use a gun, make certain Moore was dead — *if* Moore woke up while Winston was searching his room. Of course I'll pin a premeditated murder *one* on him because *Winston took the gun from the rack when he went to his room that night*—hid it under his jacket for just such an emergency. Which is why Harry Parks didn't hear anybody come downstairs for the gun. And while the others were running about the grounds, looking for the killer, Winston doubled back, sewed the magnets into Swanston's vest. Magnets in potholders . . . common thing today, makes them stick to the stove and sink. Turned out they were a bit too handy for Winston."

"Such a far-fetched idea," I said. "How could Winston have been sure you'd go for the divining routine?"

"He couldn't, but remember Winston was the one who suggested we try dowsing. You see, he's an amateur crook and was thinking like one."

"But he must have known it wouldn't have stood up in court? What did he hope to gain by the divining act?"

Lew sighed. "Probably time, to get the hell out of the country —which also would have been a stupid move. I told you, let the suspects play around and one of them would be sure to stumble. They were all big apples in their own fields, but crime is *my* business . . . and writer, believe me, the amateur killer is an awful dumb bastard!"

NEXT MONTH —

ONE OF THE VERY FEW STORIES
LESLIE CHARTERIS HAS EVER WRITTEN
THAT DOES *NOT* DEAL WITH THE SAINT . . .

THE MAN WHO LOOKED AT FISH

— in the next issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

what's new in crime

by Stefan Santesson

The increase in recent years in acts of apparently senseless and purposeless violence, and the tendency on the part of some to equate acts of hooliganism with acts of protest (a distortion of history, to put it mildly), has focused attention in the big cities, particularly here in New York, on the subway cop — that corps of men whose job it is to make it safer for the rest of us to use the subways and the other means of transportation in our major cities. The importance of these men to law enforcement, here in this city, in London, and in other major cities of the world, is a comparatively new development in society's effort to combat and to contain crime. With this in mind, it is more important than ever to understand these officers the range of whose duties are so different. Lieutenant Harry McKenna's job, in TO HIDE A ROGUE, by Thomas Walsh (Simon & Schuster, $3.50), is to track down the sniper who has apparently struck solely in order to underline the advisability of the subway's labor union paying

Another report on recent novels in which SMM *readers may be interested. The writer, editor of this magizine since 1956, edited the Unicorn Mystery Book Club during 1945-'52. He was awarded the Critic's Edgar at the April 1964 Awards Dinner of the Mystery Writers of America.*

him the demanded Twenty Thousand Dollars. But more than this is involved, and as McKenna, tormented by personal problems, comes closer to the solution, the reader gains a new understanding of these men and of the demands upon them. Mr. Walsh will be remembered as the author of NIGHTMARE IN MANHATTAN, the winner of the Mystery Writers of America Award in 1950, and of several other novels including both THIEF IN THE NIGHT and THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE.

George Simenon's MAIGRET'S DEAD MAN (Doubleday, $3.50), is a superb example of the police procedure novel with which the name of Maigret is identified. This is an earlier adventure of the then Inspector Maigret, apparently first published in France more than fifteen years ago, but the Inspector's understanding of those who live in the underworld is as impressive as it was to be in later years.

A hundred years ago there was Alexandre Dumas, a legend in his lifetime, whose TRIAL BY BATTLE, the story of the medieval method of determining the truth or falseness of an

In this century there is the accusation appears elsewhere in this issue.

incredibly prolific John Creasey, England's secret weapon in this field, whom his newest publishers in this country describe as "the *stupor-mundi* of the mystery writing field". Writing under several different aliases — too numerous to be listed here — Creasey has succeeded, particularly in his J. J. Marric novels, into telling a story — or stories — that you rarely feel is contrived, in the sense that his protagonists, with rare exceptions, are never papiér maché characters. These are flesh and blood people who, each in their way, reflect the way in which these matters about which he and others in the field write can be a part of the experiences of any among us. Just as much as an epidemic, whether social or medical, is no respecter of class or color or caste, similiarly the urge to strike out, to maim or to kill or to steal or to defraud, is likewise something to be experienced among all classes and colors and creeds. To deny this is irresponsible. And, in these times, ridiculous.

John Creasy's Dr. Palfrey stories — particularly the earlier novels — have always been a private delight to this writer. Since it so happens that I was reading *The Thriller,* and about Sexton Blake in *Union Jack*, in my mid-teens (and also studying hieroglyphics), this may of

course be a hangover from those halcyon and somewhat less complicated years. I refuse to admit this however. The Palfrey novels, many but not all of them espionage stories, are thoroughly delightful escape reading which I hope some of you will have an opportunity to read.

John Creasey's character, "the Toff", the Honorable Richard Rollison, belongs to that select group of gentlemen detectives who, in our more literate days, once dominated detective fiction. THE TOFF ON THE FARM (Walker, $3.50), is perhaps not as effective as some of the earlier novels about Rollison, but it is good reading and Walker, who've already made such a remarkable contribution to the stature of the field, are to be congratulated on taking on the series in this country. Read THE TOFF ON THE FARM. You will enjoy it.

This column was written during the final days of the illness of my mother. Astrid Medéus Santesson, born in Stockholm on September 17, 1887, who had been a distinguished artist in Sweden before coming to the United States in the early '20's, had known a Europe that we only know as History, and had been a witness to this History in the making. The happiest years of her life had been spent in Paris, in the years before the First War. She was never to return; there was so much that she was never to see again, so much she was never to know — in this existence.

She had come to enjoy mysteries (she read all that I have commented on over the years and many more. . .) — not the apologias for the criminal mind, but those novels, so out of fashion it seems, which simply tell a story and which in a sense can be said to reflect the times we know. She knew — and liked — many of the writers who have appeared in these pages and would have wanted me. I know, to thank them for the pleasure they gave her — and so many others.

She died Friday evening, July 10th.

Ibrahim Chowdry, a friend of ours for more than thirty years and a member of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Foundation of New York, and K. B. Tandon, of the Indian Delegation to the United Nations, took part in the brief service held, appropriately enough, on "Bastille Day", Tuesday evening, July 14th. Cremation followed the next morning.

Elizabeth Linington, whose work she also liked, has a passage in MY NAME IS DEATH, which I propose to discuss next month. A young man is singing

this "odd, halting minor tune"...

As I walked out one morn
in May,
The birds did sing and the
lambs did play,
The birds did sing and the
lambs did play,
"I met an old man, I met an
old man,
I met an old man by the
way.
"—I asked him what
strange countryman,
Or what strange place, or
what strange place,
Or what strange place to he
did belong.
"My name is Death, cannot
you see?
Lords, dukes and ladies bow
down to me,
And you are one of these
branches three,
And you, fair maid, and you,
fair maid,
And you, fair maid, must
come with me . . ."

Two recent novels illustrate the different approaches that are possible to what is essentially the same background. As a mass we are an apolitical people, however much we may flatter ourselves that the opposite is the case every four years. We have our folk-myths (all too often of the Fu Manchu variety) and our "understanding" of history but, again as a people, disturbingly little understanding of the effect on our lives of what is happening on the other side of the world. We have in reality no frontiers today — none that are not anachronisms when you consider that if someone dies outside Saigon tonight, or in Berlin, or in Leopoldville, or on Zanzibar, or in Lima, this can be something that can have an effect on the world our children will know.

Greece — and Cyprus — are two such places that it behooves us to know more about. The Greece, and for that matter the Crete, about which Patricia Highsmith writes in THE TWO FACES OF JANUARY (Doubleday, $3.50), is in many ways a familiar — and a hungry — world. This story of the troubles which come to Rydal Keener (for somewhat less than credible reasons I might add, with an apologetic bow to the neo-Freudian school) has to do with the adventures of an amoral company promoter who has found it necessary to take refuge, for a time, in Greece, and who promptly proceeds to do as much mischief, lethal and otherwise, as is possible for him to manage . . . The Americans in this novel are difficult to accept. The Greeks, on the other hand, seem alive and real, thoroughly c r e d i b l e, throughly complicated, and often likeable. But then this may seem so to me

because, like Rydal Keener, I have known such men.

As for Charity Blackstock's MR. CHRISTOPOULOS (London House & Maxwell, $3.95), this may give you a rather strange idea of the mores and the behavior of minor British civil servants, who find themselves on foreign soil — but this is unimportant. The Cypriotes, in all their complexity, in all their passion for the politically abstract, come through clearly. To the extent that you may being to understand why politics *can* divide families (people grow up early on the island. . . .), and why neighbor can kill neighbor, with a sense of dedication for the task at hand which is blessedly absent, as a rule, in Anglo-Saxon climes. Do read this. And sympathize with Katzi. . . .

The police procedure novel has come to become considered the special domain of writers, such as Ed McBain, Georges Simenon, and of course John Creasey writing as J. J. Marric, to the extent that we tend to forget that the list is far from complete. I am not thinking here of the formula novels, written for a particular market and relying heavily on the clichés (in another generation it would have been a musk-like perfume) held essential to these epics. I am thinking instead of the sort of writing that was done by the Lockridges here on the East Coast and by writers such as Dell Shannon and Lesley Egan (yes, Tony, I know. . . .) on the West Coast. Writing which, as in the case of the earlier Marric novels, gets across something of the human qualities of these men, these law-enforcement officers who are so seldom automatá, in the Prussian sense, but are so much more often men with a singular dedication — a sense of dedication — doing an often thankless job.

I have previously discussed Dell Shannon's delightful Lt. Mendoza. And in Lesley Egan's RUN TO EVIL (Harper & Row, $3.95), we have the excellently told story of the hunt for the murderer of an overly inquisitive ten year old boy who had stumbled on the one secret that it was death to stumble upon. Detective Vic Varallo of the Glendale police force — and Charles O'Connor will, I suspect, become one of your favorite detectives.

Robert Gaines' THE IMPOSSIBLE EVIL (Walker, $3.50), will be remembered for its wicked portrayal of the manners and mores of British politics at a certain level. Gaines' more recent, AGAINST THE PUBLIC INTEREST (Walker, $3.50),

once more deals with this nowadays neglected segment of British society — generally neglected in this field, I hasten to add — doing so with close to a sense of dedication. The story itself — the penetration of British industrial society, at the highest level, by a singularly amoral agent — is one that has been told repeatedly, with some variations, since the days of Oppenheim. But the actors in this tragicomedy are superb — particularly the Minister of Home Security.

Allan MacKinnon's REPORT FROM ARGYLL (Doubleday, $3.50) deals with the presence of a Russian agent in the Scottish Highlands — and on the importance of this to the security of the Middle East. A little improbable at times, but very pleasant.

S. B. Hough's curious MISSION IN GUEMO (Walker, $3.50) is the story of the last weeks of a strange colony of survivors of the Nazi debacle who, for a while, seem on the way to the foundation of a new order and a new way of life. One man, the reluctant agent of the British Ambassador to Guemo, is the agent of destruction of this fantastic and rather horrible society, lead by zealots and officered by zealots.

This is supposed to be happening in Central America. The disturbing reality that should not be forgotten in the first impulse to dismiss this as a badly written novel, or badly constructed, is that Eichmann, and reportedly Bormann, were not the only ones to escape to Central and South America following the collapse of the Thousand Year Reich. . . .

By way of contrast to the above, Erle Stanley Gardner's latest Perry Mason novel, THE CASE OF THE PHANTOM FORTUNE (Morrow, $3.50) is in the familiar light tempo.

Ludovic Travers, of the Broad Street Detective Agency, is an old friend of many of us. THE CASE OF THE RUSSIAN CROSS, THE CASE OF THE SAPPHIRE BROOCH, THE CASE OF THE BENEVOLENT BOOKIE *(can there be such?)*, THE CASE OF THE HAPPY MEDIUM, and THE CASE OF THE SECOND CHANCE, to mention only a few, are now followed by Christopher Bush' latest addition to the saga, THE CASE OF THE HEAVENLY TWIN (Macmillan, $3.95). Here is a truly classic detective story — beginning with the perpetration of a series of extremely ingenious frauds. Do read this.

cloudsplitter

by Lewis H. Kilpatrick

SHERIFF CLINT HAWKINS, burly, sandy mustached and wearing a slouch hat, always expected trouble when he rode his horse through this part of his Kentucky baliwick. Here the peaks and ridges were highest, the trails twisting and rutted, and the people more isolated in the narrow Red River valley. He tightened the reins and reached to the .38 special holstered to his belt as he heard hoofs thudding toward him from the wooded base of Cloudsplitter Mountain.

"Dice Butler—" he recognized the boy astride the mule and smiled. "What's your hurry this fine summer day?"

Dice pulled his mule to a halt beside the horse. Clint then saw his face was pale and he trembled in his saddle.

"Thank the Lord, Sheriff, I found you this near!" he gasped. "I was on my way to town to fetch you."

"What's wrong, son? Get a holt of yourself and talk."

"Plenty's wrong." Dice glanced fearfully over his shoulder. "It's back under Cloudsplitter—Purty Mis' Willa Eversole's a-laying thar dead."

"Who killed her?" Clint demanded sharply.

Police procedure is an expression that does not only have to do with investigative methods on the precinct level, or at the Sûreté, or at Scotland Yard. It has also to do with the investigation of a murder in the Kentucky Hills, and with the reading of clues yielded by these hills — and with a local law-enforcement officer's understanding of the men he knows so well. . . .

"Nobody did. I 'low she jumped off the top of that mountain to the rock-fall below and killed herself."

"But that don't make sense," reasoned Clint. "I stopped by the Eversoles' cottage-house a piece back. They weren't to home, but fixed on the front door was a writing from her man Jace. It said he was going to the church revival at Gray's Branch. Jace ended it like this: 'Join me in the amen corner, honey. I feel the Spirit on me strong — —'

"Dice, how'd you happen on Mis' Willa?"

The boy gulped. "I was riding to the meeting house, myself. As I got under Cloudsplitter, I seen a groundhog. Of course I stopped, got down and made out to catch him. He run into the brush at the foot of the mountain. And thar," he shuddered again, "I seen *her*. She's all twisted and her head's mashed bloody."

"Dice," ordered Clint, "go on to town, fast as you can and find Doc Hardin. He's county coroner, you know. Tell him I'll be waiting for him under Cloudsplitter."

Dice broke a switch from an overhanging limb and started at a gallop toward the village county seat.

Clint found the death scene as he described it. Old Aunt Sally Gabbard, summoned by Dice from her cabin nearby, stood tearfully, helplessly beside the body. She had spread her gingham apron over the mangled face and bosom.

"I don't know why she done it," she murmured, wiping her eyes with a wrinkled hand. "Mis' Willa was such a noble woman. She had a heap to live for. Why, Clint, she told me just a week ago, last time I saw her, that her uncle died near Lexington and left her a prime bluegrass farm. She aimed to move herself and Jace down thar soon."

Clint took off his hat and tugged his mustache thoughtfully.

"Yes, she was a high-born, educated lady. I've always wondered why, coming up here as what's called a settlement worker, she took serious to a mountain man."

Aunt Sally sighed. "Thar's no accounting for a woman's heart, I reckon she got lonely. And Jace is young and sightly. He has a taking way with females."

Clint tightened his holstered belt. "You tarry here. Don't let anybody touch her until Doc Hardin comes. I'm taking a look around."

He gazed up at Cloudsplitter, to its bald gray summit lifted above the surrounding mountains. The side next Red River was almost sheer, only bushes and scrub oaks and pines clinging to the crevices. It was a per-

fect spot for a plunge to death, he admitted, from the towering lip of sandstone hundreds of feet to the rock-fall below.

"But Mis' Willa was a cheerful woman." Stubborn instinct rather than hope sent him searching through the thickets. "She had a smile and a friendly word for everybody. She comforted the sick, victualed the hungry and saw all the young'uns hereabout had warm clothes in winter. I don't know anybody mean enough to even offer her harm."

He prowled among the limestone slabs and boulders, shouldered through the thick brush and scanned the ground; but the only tracks he discovered were those of wild varmints.

"She wasn't waylayed and clubbed down here," he had to conclude. "She certainly dropped off the top of that mountain. But I just can't figger she did it deliberate and unaided."

When Dr. Hardin arrived in his rattling, battered car with Dice Butler, he made the inquest brief and informal. Clint, despite his experience with violent death, recoiled as he watched the grizzled coroner examine the body. He had nothing to add to the evidence before them.

"Death by suicide — reason unknown," Dr. Hardin dictated aloud to himself, scribbling on a legal form with the hood of his car as a desk. "I hold it happened yesterday, maybe last night."

"Aunt Sally, I ask to borrow your wagon. We'll get another neighbor woman or two."

"Dice and me will go on to the Gray's Branch meeting house for Jace," volunteered Dr. Hardin. "Tht poor feller is sure to take this mighty hard."

Clint left the women with the body at the Eversole cottage and rode back to Cloudsplitter. The mountain sloped on the other sides. He tethered his horse in the valley and began the long climb. There was no trail.

The sandstone summit, above the timber line, was bare except for bushes and stunted trees. He knelt and scrutinized the sandstone above the rock-fall. The lichens had been scratched and scraped recently. He looked back from the ledge — and saw marks of high-heeled shoes in the shallow dirt. There was nothing else. Twilight closed as he returned to the valley. He cantered back to town under a dark moon.

"No, she didn't do it deliberate and unaided," he kept repeating to himself.

The morning after the burial, seated at his roll-top desk in the court house and watching the hallway beyond his open door, he saw Jace Eversole come from the county judge's office. He wore a Western ten-gallon hat and his trousers were tucked into spurless cowboy boots. Clint re-

called he had affected that costume ever since taking a shipment of cattle to Kansas City a few years ago.

"Jack —" he called. "Jace Eversole, I hate to break in on your sorrow, but I want a word with you."

"I'm always glad to oblige the law," smiled Jace, coming into the office.

Clint got up, shut the hall door and returned to his desk. The young widower took a chair nearby, tilted back his ten-gallon hat and crossed his booted legs.

"Jace, I'm asking you a few questions just to finish my report." Clint eyed him from face to feet. "When was the last time you saw Mis' Willa alive?"

"The evening she killed herself," Jace answered readily. "She had a misery in her head – or so she 'lowed — and set off to Aunt Sally Gabbard's for some herb bitters."

"You didn't go after her when she never came home?"

"No, Clint. Willa often took the night and next morning with Aunt Sally when she had them spells. I didn't worry, saddled my mare and went to the revival meeting." He sighed heavily. "The Spirit has took me at long last!"

"It pleasures me to hear that. Jace, you have been a wild one in your time. It's good you've gone to the amen corner instead of getting drunk and shooting up meetings as you once did. I reckon being wed to Mis' Willa a year gentled you considerable."

Jace took a bandana from his hip pocket and dabbed at his eyes. "She was a purty gal, Clint, even if she was older than me. I loved her mightily. Her dying in sin hurts me terrible." He sighed again and shook his head.

Clint compressed his lips and nibbled the tips of his mustache. Jace was handsome, he admitted, always clean-shaven and with dare-devil brown eyes that appealed to women.

"That's all I want of you now," he said. "Know I share your sorrow. Fare you well."

He again rode the rutted trails to the Red River hills. Reaching Aunt Sally Gabbard's cabin, he found her seated on a bench behind a hedge of hollyhocks. She was smoking her clay pipe.

"Get down, hitch and come in," she invited cordially.

"Thank you, ma'am. I don't care if I do." He joined her on the bench.

"Yes, Clint," she said puffing her pipe, after they discussed their last meeting: "I'm trying to be a good neighbor to Jace. I often take him cooked victuals and neat up his house for him. He's give me all Mis' Willa's clothes. 'Lows he just can't bear 'em around."

"Judge Combs told me he

came right off to claim that Blue Grass farm. He's her only heir, you know."

"I reckon he won't pine for long," Aunt Sally gossiped. "I see him pass here going down the river to the Lawsons'. Them red-headed twin gals thar will heir considerable property themselves some day. He never was a hand for hard work."

"Aunt Sally you said you hadn't seen Mis' Willa since the week before we found her body."

"That's right. She knew I do herb doctoring and come to share some new fangled medicine she got down in Lexington. It's good for the swamp chills."

"Aunt Sally" — Clint looked her straight in the eye — "I've got a queer favor to ask of you. I want it kept personal private."

She took the pipe from her mouth, alert. "Just you name it, Clint. I got a free tongue, but I can keep my gums shut."

"I want to borrow some of Mis' Willa's clothes," he told her. "A sunbonnet, dress, stockings and shoes. Fact is, I'd like to see all her shoes Jace gave you."

Her shrewd eyes narrowed. "I don't know what you're up to, Clint, But — come inside the house."

He took the bundle of clothes out to Aunt Sally's barn. There they stuffed a meal sack, the dress and stockings with hay. She got a needle and thread, and followed his directions.

"It looks almost like her," she shuddered. "Clint Hawkins, I feel like a blasphemer!"

"I'll tote this dummy to the rock-fall after dark," he said. "My next job's to see Doc Hardin tomorrow."

He found the doctor skeptical when he went to his upstairs office on the court house square.

"I'm glad you gave the verdict you did," Clint said. "It's left me a clear trail for following the scent. That smell's stuck in my nose ever since I spied those sharp heel tracks in the sandstone dirt."

"Maybe I was hasty, but I won't own yet I was wrong." Dr. Hardin rubbed his rugged jaw thoughtfully. "Clint, a female sometime is deceiving without meaning to be. Troubles go on in her mind that don't show in her face and acts. Jace, even after he wed, never stopped flirting with other women. You've got clues but no real evidence."

"That I know. It's why I'm doing what I am doing. You leave the sick to the granny doctors today, get on top of Cloudsplitter and hide in the cedar thicket a piece back from the ledge. I'll need a witness and maybe some other help. Doc. I'm starting in an hour."

With a pint bottle of moonshine whisky in his hip pocket, the .38 special holstered to his

belt and a large coil of hempen rope across his saddle bow, he stopped at the gate of the Eversole cottage that early afternoon. He had to halloo twice before Jace, wearing the cowboy hat and boots, opened the front door.

"Why — Howdy, Clint." He seemed surprised and not very cordial. "I was hoping I'd see you again to tell you goodbye."

"You going away?" Looking beyond him, Clint saw a corded trunk and a valise just inside the doorway.

"Yes —", Jace walked slowly toward the gate. "I can't endure it here no longer. I've got a good renter for this place and I'm moving down near Lexington."

Clint took a folded paper from his inside coat pocket. "I'm sorry to discommode you, but I've made you my deputy for a spell. We're goin to do some detective work."

Jace scowled. "But I'm a farmer and a trader," he protested. "I ain't any detective."

"Neither am I. I'm just a plain Kaintucky mountain sheriff."

"Where are we going, Clint? What all do you want me to do?"

"We ain't going far. And I'll tell you what to do when we get there. You won't need a badge or gun. Saddle your mare and come along!"

Jace started to argue further; then, still scowling, reluctantly obeyed the order.

They rode stirrup to stirrup around the base of Cloudsplitter. There they dismounted.

"You lead the way," said Clint. He slung the coil of rope over his shoulder. "Our business is at the very top."

Jace was silent as they began the steep ascent. Half way to the summit, he stopped and turned.

"Clint," he panted, "since talking to you in your office last week, I've been a-studying. You never asked me why Willa might 'a' killed herself. Now I've got a idea. Maybe, traipsing around like a feller will, I didn't always pleasure her. She might 'a' pined for another man."

"Who?" Clint snapped.

"Well — seeing we're both sheriffs now, we can go back to my house, sit down and figger it out."

"We'll do our work here first. Jace, I didn't make you my deputy to blacken your wife's name."

They resumed the climb. Reaching the summit, Jace pulled off his hat and sank to the sandstone. Clint glanced quickly about, fixing his scrutiny for a moment on a clump of dwarf cedars some thirty yards away.

Then he unwound the rope and made a loop at one end.

"'Pears you're getting ready for a hanging," Jace grinned uneasily, wiping his face with his bandana.

"Kaintucky don't have legal hangings any more. We just electrocute killers."

Jace changed the subject: "It sure is purty looking down and around from here. Willa used to come up often to get the view."

"I'm glad she had such a stretch of peaceful mountains and valleys, with Red River flowing far below, before death shut her eyes forever. Here, Jace —" Clint reached to his hip pocket and took out the bottle of moonshine. "This'll steady your nerves — if drinking now ain't against your religion."

"Aw, that revival meeting ended last Sunday," Jace laughed. He grabbed the bottle and pulled the corncob stopper. "Yes, a little dram will cheer me."

"Help yourself. I know I'm asking a heap of you." Clint waited, smiling, until the bottle was half empty. "Now, Jace, I'm putting this rope around your ankles. Those thick boots will keep it from falling. Leave off your hat, take everything out of your pockets and come to the edge here. You're younger than me for this sort of detective work. I'm tying the other and of the rope to this scrub oak. You'll be safe. I'll let you down easy."

"What for?" Jace asked suspiciously, his reddening eyes blinking. "Why, that's where Willa went to her death!"

"Finish that liquor, Jace," Clint urged soothingly. "All I want is for you to go down over the cliff a piece and tell me what you see. It's just a fool notion of mine, but I reckon you'll oblige me."

"I ain't afraid!" Jace threw away the emptied bottle. He helped fix the rope around his ankles and crawled to the edge of the cliff.

"Take it easy," Clint encouraged him. "I don't want you hurt. Hold your head clear. Just keep looking down and tell me what you see."

"I don't see nothing," came in a muffled voice. "It's a straight drop clean to the rock-fall."

"Keep looking. You're right where Mis' Willa went down. She didn't have nothing to catch on to when she fell, let alone a rope around her feet. Head first she dropped to those hard, sharp rocks you see. Jace, who's that man you suspicion?"

"Clint, I'm getting dizzy. The blood's a-pounding my head. Pull me back up!"

Clint suddenly released a yard of rope around the tree trunk. A wild yell came from the further end as the hemp jerked taut again.

"Pull me up, I say! I'm scared. . . . . Clint, thar is something down on the rocks! It's a woman laying. . . . Clint, she's got on Willa's dress! I can make out her bonnet and shoes . . . *It is her.*

Clint —". There was a hoarse gasp.

Clint leaned over the cliff. "Yes, that's where she fell and that's how she looked. Tricked up here to see the fine view she loved. Maybe first choked, then pushed over to her death. Who do you say did it, Jace?"

The rope twisted in his hands. "I never — Clint, my head's busting. I didn't reckon it could be so terrible." His voice thinned to a wail.

"Take it calm. Nobody's harming you."

A shuddering scream that echoed back from the valley. "I own up .... I done it .... get it over .... than keep hanging .... down and peering .... her dead corpse .... Yes .... I did kill her .... just like .... you say —"

"I've noted his words," Clint heard behind him. "He's told enough. Now let's have mercy even on him."

"He didn't have mercy on her, Doc," Clint reminded him. "Wearying of her and craving an easy life with her property, he even hid in a meeting house amen corner."

It took the full strength of both of them to pull Jace back on the ledge. High-heeled boots first, his face purple and his blooshot eyes bulging, he lay panting. Clint left the rope about his feet while Dr. Hardin put a vial under his quivering nostrils. "Jace, you're the first deputy I ever had who caught himself."

"I ain't convicted yet," Jace snarled, recovering enough to glare up at him. "You tormented that confession out of me."

Clint retorted: "I got a witness here — a doctor— who'll swear I didn't. I treated you good; even gave you liquor I took off a bootlegger. Facing your guilt and what looked like your murdered wife, you scared yourself into telling the truth."

Dr. Hardin loosened the rope from Jace's ankles, but slipped it up and tightened it about his arm.

"Any jury that tries you, Jace Eversole," he said, "will wish the sheriff could put this hemp around your neck and hang you legal. Fetch him along, Clint."

the cuban blonde

by Joseph Commings

Many girls visited Fidel Castro when he came to New York. Peggy Hurley was one of them. She was the one he wouldn't forget.

She waited until the night of September 26, 1960, before she made her first step toward going to bed with him.

It was going to be a totally unexpected pleasure for him. While he had never met her before, it was quite possible that Tom had spoken to him about her.

A gnawing necessity was spurring her on to see him this way. And she was unshakingly confident that she could barter her abundant blonde charms in exchange for what she could seduce from him.

Morally she was not that kind of wicked girl. She was employed as a private secretary by Jerrold Associates, Public Relations, on Madison Avenue. Besides being physically attractive, she had a single-mindedness of purpose and stick-to-it qualities that gained her yearly increases

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The story behind yesterday's headlines. . . . U.S. Senator Brooks U. Banner, unquestionably one of the more unpredictable members of that normally predictable and august body of men, is in Havana, dickering with Castro for the release of political prisoners. One woman — one beautiful and angry woman — is in a position to wreck Banner's negotiations. . . .

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in salary from her boss. She smoked a pack of Newport cigarettes a day and had her coffee breaks and luncheons at Schrafft's and spent a lot of time on her hair. She was a baseball fan and she was rooting for the Pittsburgh Pirates. This season they won their first pennant in 33 years. On the subway she carried her copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird.* Everybody was reading it.

Lonely without her mate, she spent much of her spare time at the movies. Last night at the Trans-Lux on 52nd Street and Lexington Avenue she saw Marilyn Monroe in *Let's Make Love.* Marilyn was her favorite actress. Her friends told her that she resembled the movie star. Only, they said, Peggy was bigger and sexier.

For the past two years she had been sharing a bachelor-girl apartment with a young registered nurse named Virginia Peters. Virginia had day duty at the Polyclinic Hospital. Peggy had lived like this ever since her husband Tom had gone to Cuba to join Castro's forces in 1958.

She could say virtuously that none of the leering wolves—and there were many—had been able to make her take off her panties. *I'm saving my love for you, Tommy.*

Until now. Until Fidel Castro came to New York.

She was making no mistake in her approach. Castro was a bear for girls. She had heard about pregnant girls in Havana boasting that he was the father of their unborn babies. Sedate matrons offered their teen-age daughters so that the girls would have the glory of going to bed with the Leader.

How would Marilyn screen-act in this situation? she thought. She'd come on strong with a brazen front and a wiggling behind. *Yes, let's make love!*

Tom Hurley was a United States paratrooper in the Korean War. Awarded the black belt for judo, he had taught her how to protect herself against violent men. He had shown her how she could effectively use the edge of her palm, a rabbit punch, or a rolled-up newspaper. "The streets of New York at night," he used to say, "are worse than MIG Alley."

Quite a man, she thought. Young and tough. He was only 29. He had entered Cuba through the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and then scaled the Sierra Maestra to Castro's encampment on top of Pico Turquino. When he first arrived he could hardly speak Spanish, but he soon learned. He wanted Peggy to learn Spanish too so that she could join him in Havana as soon as the revolution was successful. He made a quick rise among the rebels by drilling and

training raw recruits.

In January, 1959, he rode alongside the Chief when they made their triumphant entrance into Havana.

Later when Castro began to spout his Marxist-Leninist line to the masses, Tom wrote and told Peggy that the stench was in his nostrils. He hadn't fought the Commies in Korea only to go over to their side eventually with Fidel. He was about ready to decamp.

Six months later he was arrested by the National Revolutionary Police on charges of sending arms to anti-Castro rebels in the Sierra del Escambray. He was tried as a counterrevolutionary and sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment. Peggy heard from him just once more. His brief letter told her that he was being held in the maximum-security prison on the Isle of Pines.

Peggy petitioned the State Department in Washington on his behalf. The official reply was that since Tom had sworn allegiance to a foreign cause, he had lost his United States citizenship, but that the State Department would see what it could do to effect his release.

That was the last Peggy heard about it.

Now the only man in the world who could free Tom was Fidel Castro.

Castro, Eisenhower, Khrushchev, Tito, Nasser. They were all at the United Nations those hectic two weeks in September.

Fidel arrived in New York by plane from Havana on the 18th. He and his large entourage stayed one night in the Hotel Shelburne at Lexington Avenue and 37th Street. There were rumors that the *barbudos*—the bearded ones—littered the place with their garbage, burned holes in carpets and bedsheets with lighted cigars, yanked telephones out of the walls, plucked chickens, and staged a wild Cuban party. The management protested. Fidel stalked angrily from the Shelburne to complain in person to the Secretary General of the U. N. against the treatment he was getting in New York. He said that he had a dispute with the hotel over unacceptable cash demands. Immediately the Theresa Hotel in Harlem offered him accommodations. Fidel and his whole roistering gang moved up to Harlem at Seventh Avenue and 125th Street. The Cubans took over forty rooms at the Theresa.

September 20—Nikita Krushchev fondly embraced Fidel on the sidewalk in front of the Theresa.

September 23—Krushchev invited Fidel to dinner at the Soviet United Nations Mission on Park Avenue. Nikita cooled his

heels until Fidel arrived thirty-eight minutes late.

Peggy read all about Fidel's erratic and boorish behavior in the newspapers and watched it in the movie newsreels. Fidel had not yet addressed the General Assembly at the U. N. Peggy decided to wait until after he had made his speech. Then the tension would be off and he would feel more in the need for relaxation. And the granting of special favors.

On Monday, September 26, she excused herself from her job at three o'clock. She went directly home to the fashionable apartment she shared with Virginia Peters. The nurse was away, working at the hospital. With mounting nervous impatience, Peggy watched the TV screen.

Fidel took the floor at 3:50 to start delivering the longest oration ever heard at the General Assembly. Peggy studied his physique and the way he moved his hands and the sound of his voice. She paid very little attention to the translation of what he was saying in Spanish. Every once in a while the import of his words would come through to her and she would burst out: "Oh, you dirty liar!"

At six o'clock he was still ranting. She switched off the set and started to get dressed for him. Tight and solid in a blue jersey sheath, with a minimum of underthings, she took a cab to 125th Street. Police were keeping the crowds a half a block away from the hotel. Peggy squirmed through the crowd to the front rank.

At 8:47 a black Oldsmobile arrived, followed by other cars. The crowd applauded and cheered. *Viva Fidel!* Surrounded by bodyguards, the big bearded man in the khaki forage cap and the olive-green combat jacket entered the hotel, news pix popping as he crossed the sidewalk. Once he was well inside, the police let the crowd surge forward.

Peggy pushed into the lobby. The police had set up a security center and were giving everybody who entered a routine screening. Her handbag was looked into for a gun, bomb, stiletto, or any other deadly weapon she might be carrying. They didn't search her person. It was obvious that nothing lethal was concealed beneath that skin-tight sheath except for her own dynamic body.

There were sloppy, bearded men in wrinkled fatigue uniforms guarding the elevators. Peggy tried to get by them. A man in a black silk suit stopped her with a strong hairy hand.

He had a pearl stickpin in his somber tie, a sweeping buccaneer's mustache, and a sour smell.

He smiled with gold teeth and frisked her with his evil black eyes. "Where are you going?"

She stopped and stared back at him with her own deep blue eyes. "I want to see Dr. Castro," she said firmly.

"Otro puta," he said.

"Siento mucho. No habla Espanol," she mumbled. "Very sorry. I don't speak Spanish."

He cheerfully obliged in English. "Another prostitute."

"You are very much mistaken!" she said coldly.

One of the *milicianos,* barring her way, regarded her with half-closed eyes. He said with a dirty chortle: "They *all* want to see Dr. Castro!" He waved his arm about the lobby.

Scores of women gathered there. Most of them were obviously V-girls though some looked like college co-eds, and even a few whose names might have appeared in the social register. The socialites would excuse their presence there by saying that they wanted only to lighten the Fidelistas' burden.

The man in the black silk suit thumped his puffed-up chest. "I, Teniente Ernesto Sagrada, will decide!" He surveyed Peggy critically. Then he began tapping and pinching her about her breasts and loins as if she were a prize show animal.

She stood unmoved throughout this humiliating physical examination. She couldn't incur this evil-eyed man's displeasure. His decision would mean her own success or failure.

"Si, si!" he said enthusiastically. "He will want to see *you!"*

Sagrada took her by the arm and rang vigorously for the elevator. "Dr. Castro vaccinates a new girl every night. Maybe two or three. *Quien sabe?* He is the *Jefe Maximo."*

The elevator door opened and they got in alone.

"If you are one of the fortunate ones," he continued, "the vaccination will take."

They got off on the eighth floor. The corridor was empty and silent except for a *barbudo* armed with a pistol. The bearded guard ogled them as they approached, his gaze darting over Peggy's figure interestedly.

Along the hall they went and Sagrada rapped on a door. A soft, hoarse voice bade them come in. Sagrada turned the knob in his big hairy fist and pushed the door open and led Peggy in. She saw Fidel Castro for the first time in the flesh.

In recording his exploits, his supporters made him out to be a combination of Ulysses, Hannibal and Casanova. His detractors thought he was just a greasy slob.

She thought he was quite a man, a powerful six-footer, 34-years-old, olive-skinned, full-

faced, with a neck like *el toro* and that scraggly beard trademark. His battle-green fatigue uniform had been pressed for his U. N. speech, but now it was getting crumpled again. He was standing comfortably in his stocking feet and he was heartily puffing a big half-dollar Havana cigar.

"Un rubia." Sagrada kissed his own fingertips ecstatically. *"Bello, bello."*

Fidel took the cigar out of his mouth and waved it dismissively. Peggy heard Sagrada depart swiftly.

Fidel's brown eyes flashed at her. His intense face pushed close to hers and his whispering melodramatic voice made it seem like a scene in a theatre. "Do you speak Spanish?"

"No," she said, her throat vibrating. "Not much."

"My English is not so good. But it doesn't matter. Sit down."

She sat down, provocatively crossing her long legs for him. His personality was overpowering. She felt herself trembling all over.

He tossed his burning cigar into a metal wastebasket, where it smouldered. He sat down too, close to her. His feet were sweating. She could smell them. He scratched one foot through the sock. His hands were dirty.

She felt she had to say something. "That was quite a speech you made today."

"There were twenty-eight rounds of applause," he said. "Dr. Raul Rao kept count for me."

"Wonderful," she murmured.

"Why shouldn't it be? I can outshoot, outrun, outswim, outride, outtalk, and outwench any man in Cuba."

He reached out to a table to pick up some benzedrine pills. He popped them into his mouth and swallowed them with a brandy chaser. He wiped his mouth on his sleeve. He didn't offer her anything.

"Enough talk." His eyes, filled with lust, never left her. "I'm ready."

She got up and walked slowly into the bedroom.

She waited until the lovemaking began. He was like a dormant volcano that she was causing to erupt. She sensed that this was the right moment to strike her bargain. She would get his promise first. She held him off, delaying him, as she told him that she was Tom Hurley's wife and she was offering herself to beg for her husband's freedom.

Fidel's hoarse voice was almost a groan of frustrated anguish. *"Si,* Tom was once my friend. He did a bad thing to me. Very bad. He became a counterrevolutionary. I had to arrest him."

"You know what it's like to be in the penitentiary on the Isle

of Pines. You've been there yourself."

He burned with impatience. "Perhaps he has been punished enough. *Si, si!* I'll agree to release him."

"When? When?"

"When I go back."

"Please don't break your word!"

"No, no!" I agree to anything you ask! Only, *por Dios,* stop *talking!"*

With his heated promise ringing in her ears and all his masculinity clamoring for her, she lost all her resistance. She had not been with a man since Tom left two years ago.

"Tommy, forgive me!" she prayed.

At six in the morning Fidel said that he had to sleep. "Any of the others I would be ready to throw out. You're different. I want you to stay."

Peggy tugged the tight jersey sheath down over her nudity. "I must go."

"I had four lovers." Enumerating them on his long fingers, he gave her four Latin American female names. "They were all brunettes. Now I want a blonde. Peggy Hurley. I'm leaving on Wednesday. Come to Cuba with me."

"No," she said.

"I will treat you like a queen."

She felt that the bargain would be kept stronger if she stayed away from him. "I'll go there only when I can join my husband."

Fidel grunted and rolled over in bed, turning his back to her.

She left.

Standing beside the Soviet luxury airliner at the airport, Fidel made a parting statement to the assembled press. "I will return to New York soon again. As soon as possible."

Peggy read that in the morning paper and wondered if he was thinking of her when he said it.

She didn't hear from him directly again. Several times in the next few years she got carefully written letters on stationery from the Cuban Mission to the United Nations letting her know that she would be most welcome in Cuba, that her travel there would be expedited, and that she would get a red-carpet treatment on arriving in Havana.

Clearly, she was still very much in Fidel's mind.

She heard nothing about Tom's release. She never answered the inveigling letters.

Still, she kept her hopes high. There must be some good in Fidel, she convinced herself, otherwise Tom would not have sided with him at the start. She and Tom had planned to make love forever in a hacienda in Pinar del Rio. She still wanted

that dream to come true. She earnestly took up Spanish with phonograph records from Linguaphone and Berlitz. She bought a copy of *El Diario de Neuva York* each weekday and read it on the subway going to work. Eventually she could passably speak the language.

In mid-April, 1961, a band of Cubans-in-exile tried to establish a beachhead at Cochinos Bay. The invasion failed dismally. In reprisal Fidel ordered indiscriminate executions.

Then Peggy got the letter from the State Department.

. . . You realize the great difficulty in facilitating matters with Cuba at this time. We regret to inform you that information has come to us from a reliable source that on May 11, 1961, Tom Hurley was executed by a firing squad in the old Cubana Fortress . . .

Life dropped out of her like a stone. She was so grief-stricken she couldn't go to work for a month. She hardly ate anything. She saw no one, except her nurse roommate, Virginia Peters, whose ministrations kept her alive.

Fidel had taken everything and had given nothing. He had known and he had gone ahead and had Tom shot. He didn't want Tom to have her. He wanted her for himself.

Gradually she took up once again the normal routines. But she wasn't the same girl. Her blue eyes had a cold, far-away look.

She waited.

Eventually another enticing letter came from the Cuban Mission, repeating the request for her to fly to Havana in style. This time she immediately wrote a reply, accepting the invitation.

Her mind had been made up for a long time. She was going to bed with Fidel again. Only this time she was going to kill him.

Colonel Walter Seven sat in an office on the fourth floor of the State Department Building in Washington, D. C., listening to the Secretary of State. Seven was a lean, dangerous hawk of a man. Dark-faced, his tall and spare body was folded in the chair.

"This emergency must be handled with the utmost dispatch," said the Secretary of State. "We can't waste a single moment."

Seven nodded lazily and his thin face rippled with wry humor. "International situation. Fraught with peril. It must be. Otherwise you wouldn't have pushed the panic button for me. What's happened?"

The Secretary of State frowned at the levity in Seven's tone. "You're right. This girl, Peggy Hurley, got her small pox shot,

then picked up a tourist card from the Mexican Government Tourist Bureau. She bought a plane ticket at Aeronaves de Mexico. This morning at 10:00 o'clock she boarded a jet and took a non-stop flight to Mexico City."

"So far," said Seven," it sounds pretty prosaic. A girl on a vacation."

"At Mexico City, she won't have any trouble picking up a visa from the Cuban Embassy for a trip to Havana. When she gets to Havana, she's going to kill Castro."

"Good for her." Seven smiled thinly. "That appeals to me."

"Think again. In our ticklish relations with Cuba, we're walking a tightrope. We can't go off one hair to one side or the other. One slip could blow the whole works up in our face. The CIA's always maintained that matters could be infinitely worse, both for Cuba and for ourselves, if Castro gets killed. We'd rather have a live demagogue than a dead martyr, you understand, Seven. With Castro dead, his image throughout Latin America would be more potent. Alive, he does hold the fabric of Cuban society together. Without him at the helm, there would be chaos and anarchy. A blood bath I fear to contemplate."

Seven was sober. "Of course. I see that."

"What's of more immediate importance, Seven, is that Senator Banner has been making trips down to Havana for the past several months to dicker with Castro about the release of political prisoners. Last winter he helped to free over a thousand Cubans who were imprisoned after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. He's down there right now just about getting the last deal settled. This time it's twenty-one Americans. He's in daily personal conversation with Castro. For the sake of everybody concerned, we've got to keep Castro alive!"

"How do you know this girl is going to try to kill him?"

"Another girl, Virginia Peters, who lived with her knew most of the story about how Peggy Hurley appealed personally to Castro on behalf of her husband and about Tom Hurley's subsequent execution before a firing squad. Before Peggy left New York, she gave Virginia a sealed envelope, making her promise not to open it unless Peggy failed to return from her trip. After Peggy left, Virginia got suspicious, read the letter, which revealed Peggy's intentions once she got to Havana, and then informed us."

"There's a simple answer," said Seven. "Warn Castro about the girl."

"Who's going to tell him?"

asked the Secretary of State bleakly. "You? Me? And would he believe us? He'd think it was just another *Yanqui* trick to deprive him of his pleasures. An embargo on blondes. And he's had an unscratched itch for this particular blonde for a couple of years. Nothing we could *say* can stop this meeting." He paused. "Have you considered what would be in store for the girl if he *did* believe us?"

Seven's dark face was grim. "Only too well." He blew out his cheeks resignedly. The party at the Pentagon was over. "You want me to stop her."

"Yes," said the Secretary of State decisively. "In Cuba."

Seven nodded. Wherever there was a war, he was always in the thick of it. Sending him to Cuba showed good State Department judgment. He could be trusted to make friends with the Cubans and then elude them. He could take care of himself in a wild country, take long chances, talk himself out of hot spots in several languages, and probably live to bring the girl back.

"What's she look like?" he asked.

"Here's a snapshot."

He took the picture that was handed to him and looked at it with keen interest.

Her flax-blonde hair fell to a graceful pageboy roll low on her shoulders. Her eyes sparkled. Her luscious mouth was wide open, laughing. Her full breasts, in a turtleneck sweater, were high-peaked and sensual. The waist was small and the thighs were boldly outlined in a tight skirt and the slim legs swept down into a pair of very high heels.

"Wow!" said Seven. "No wonder Fidel flipped!" He put the snapshot into his pocket. "Brief me."

"Since all tourist air travel from our country to Cuba has been banned, she would have to fly to Havana via Mexico City. The Aeronaves de Mexico flight for Mexico City left at 10:00 a. m. and it takes roughly five hours. She reached Mexico City about 3:00 p. m. She checked into the Motor Park Villa near Chapultepec Woods."

Seven glanced up questioningly. "How do you know?"

"We learned that she made reservations."

"You're thorough."

The Secretary of State smiled humorlessly. "We have to be. She picked up her visa from the Cuban Embassy. No trouble there. They were expecting her to show up. The Cubana Airlines flight to Havana will leave at 8:00 o'clock tomorrow morning. She will be on it." He paused and then added dryly: "Even if she never sees Castro, she'll be committing a crime. It's illegal

to enter Communist Cuba without a validated passport."

"She couldn't care less." Seven shifted his long legs restlessly. He was tired of sitting in plush offices. He wanted action. "You don't think I have time to catch her before she leaves Mexico?"

"Hardly any. We can't take the risk of having you miss her en route. That would leave you stranded in Mexico. It's now"—he consulted his wristwatch—"10:30 p.m. She has over twelve hours' headstart on us. But you can easily get there ahead of her."

"How?"

"An Air Force jet to Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. You can make it in three hours. There you'll be equipped for a parachute jump into Cuba from a small fast Army plane."

"Where do I land?"

The Secretary of State stood up and went to a map pinned on a wall-board with thumb tacks. The legend on the map read: *Mapa Esso Republica de Cuba.* It was an excellent road map in color put out by Esso Standard Oil Company (Cuba), designed for Cubans, for all the names on it were in Spanish.

The Secretary of State picked up a yardstick from a side table. "Take this chart with you, Seven, when you go. It's one of the best we've got. There's a street layout of Havana on the back." He tapped the map with the yardstick. "Near this point you will make the landing."

Seven's keen black eyes could read the name of the town from halfway across the office. "Batabano."

"Yes. It's a sponge-fishing port 35.5 miles from Havana. You'll land this side of the Quivican River. That's the most strategic landing place—neither too near nor too far from your objective. Everything has already been prepared. We have a *friend* in that locality. A member of the Cuban resistance. There'll be a jeep waiting for you and you'll be driven to Havana."

"With no hitches," said Seven thoughtfully, "I ought to chute in about 2:30 or 3:00 a.m."

"Yes, Seven. Easily that. You'll have plenty of time to be at Rancho Bayeros Airport when Peggy Hurley debarks from the Cubana Airlines plane at noon tomorrow."

Seven started to get up. "Is that all, sir?"

"One more important thing." The Secretary of State was pulling the thumb tacks out of the map on the wall-board. "The only person you'll contact in Havana is Senator Banner."

"Yes, I know him well." Seven's smile was mirthless. "The old bastard."

The Secretary of State's cough was evasive as Seven took the

folded map. "He already knows you're coming." He shook Seven's hand warmly. "Good night, Seven—and good luck!"

Everything worked out smoothly according to plan. All the way down the Air Force personnel had been alerted for his arrival. At Patrick Air Force Base he dressed in fatigue clothes and put on a pair of paratrooper's jump boots. He had a quick cigarette and a cup of coffee in the Officers' Mess before strapping on a parachute, his nerves singing with eagerness. He got into the twin-engine Beechcraft U-8E, an Army major at the controls.

It was a little after three in the morning when the major flapped down to stalling speed and motioned earthward. "This's it, Colonel!"

Seven looked out the cabin door. There was nothing below but black April night. The pilot had been flying blind on instruments.

"I'll take your word for it, buddy."

He jumped.

"Now," he thought as he drifted down, "will that jeep be there?"

He landed safely near a sugar cane field. He unbuckled the harness and buried the chute. There were no signs of life around him, no lights, no signals. It was cold and he shivered. Swearing like a true soldier, he huddled down in the canebrake to wait for daylight and the warming sun.

Pearl-grey light was brightening the sky when he heard a motor vehicle joggling on the rutted dirt roadway near by. He crept through the canebrake to observe.

It was an open jeep and the driver was wearing a rough Cuban military uniform. The jeep stopped and the driver stood up in it, looking around.

It was a girl.

Seven was armed with a flat black automatic in one pocket of his fatigues. He had taken it out.

The girl saw him. She waved at him. "Hey!"

She jumped out of the jeep and started to walk toward him.

Waving the automatic, he said sharply: *"Alto! Quien va?"*

She halted. "Colonel Seven?" she said in English, a whisper that carried. "I'm to pick you up."

He came forward toward her cautiously. "Who are you?"

"Laura Mesa," she said.

She was about average height, with long dark-brown hair and her narrow delicate face was dominated by a pair of great big green tiger-eyes.

"I'm anti-Castro," she said.

"How do I know?"

She was very responsive. She

took documents from the breast pocket of her olive-green uniform. "Here are your fake identification papers. And ration cards for food, clothes and shoes. It's the best we could do on such short notice." She looked him over and her glowing green eyes didn't miss a thing. "You're dark enough to pass for a Cuban, but you're too tall. You can change out of those clothes once we get to the city. Come on, I'll take you to Senator Banner."

He pocketed the automatic, then glanced briefly at the papers. Everything seemed in order. He followed her toward the jeep. In spite of the masculine-looking *miliciana* uniform, she was wearing, she walked with a feline hip movement that was all feminine.

She drove expertly on the bumpy dirt road through the sugar plantation. "Every sugar mill," she pointed out, "has been turned into a fortress. Well garrisoned and well guarded. If we're stopped, let me do the talking."

"Okay, Laura," he said.

She glanced at him with a little cat smile.

They reached the asphalt-topped highway that led to Havana. The rising sun glared on the road surface. Laura put on a pair of dark sun-glasses. He could see the tiger-eyes lurking just behind the lenses. They passed more sugar cane and then some half-starved grazing cattle. When he saw the feather-duster royal palms he knew that they were approaching the outskirts of the city. Just as attractive as in the tourist folders, he thought. But what no tourist folder included were some glimpses of JS-2's — 51-ton Soviet tanks — and SU-100 assault guns.

"I thought Kennedy got the Russians to pull out last October," he said.

"Oh, come on, Colonel! Are you kidding?" She stared straight ahead. "You can tell the Russians, even if they're not in uniform. They're a sloppy bunch. They don't even wash very often. They're drinking up all of our rubbing alcohol. You simply can't get a bottle of rubbing alcohol in any drug store. The Russians are swilling it all down."

The city was awake.

Guns were everywhere. Department stores were guarded by uniformed girls carrying Czech rifles to prevent sabotage.

"The kids had a lousy Christmas. There were hardly any toys. Santa Claus had a black beard and smoked a cigar." Laura gave her nose a little wrinkle of disgust. "No coffee, no wine. A bottle of brandy sells for $38. We have chickenless Wednesdays. Black market prices are skyrocketing. They

show propaganda movies between night club acts. Terror keeps the people from talking."

Seven shook his head sadly. He hadn't been here since the regime of Batista. Carefree and obscene Havana was gone. Now, in the store windows, scowling pictures of Lenin, Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung almost crowded out those of Castro. Posters proclaimed that Cuba was a socialized republic. It shook hands with the USSR, Red China, and other Communistic countries. Hammer-and-sickle emblems were prevalent.

Seven was driven to a flat in the Vedado district, where he changed into a summer-weight grey suit. It fitted him fairly well, except that the pants were too short.

Seven grinned. "The tailor goofed."

"It's perfect," exclaimed Laura when she saw him coming out of the bedroom. "Nothing fits anybody any more." She had been in the kitchenette. "Now for a cup of *cafe sole.*"

"Senator Banner will be waiting," he said.

"We have time. Let him finish his breakfast of beefsteak and brandy."

They sat down.

She asked: "Have you got an American cigarette? I'm dying for one."

"Try a king-size Kent." He offered her his pack.

"My favorite brand." She took one with a pleased smile.

He lit it for her. "How'd you get mixed up in this, Laura?"

"I'm not a Cuban. My family comes from Spain." She blew out cigarette smoke with nervous energy. "We just don't like living under dictators."

He tried to picture her family. Proud Castilians. She looked proud. He watched her drinking her black coffee. He would have found it difficult to describe her accurately. Her face and even the color of her eyes changed with her fleeting moods. Sometimes, grinning, she looked like a hoydenish sixteen-year-old. Other times, her long-lashed eyes lowered demurely, she reminded him of a madonna in a Renaissance painting.

"Where's Banner staying?" he asked.

"Hotel Nacional de Cuba."

"He would," he grinned. It was the finest hotel on the island.

"But you won't meet him there. It won't be safe to talk inside. You'll be at the corner of Trocadero when he comes strolling along the Prado."

They finished their coffee break and went out to the jeep again. She drove him to the Prado, a long parade walk that bisected the city. Seven got out of the jeep and went through

an entrance flanked by bronze lions. The central strollway of colored terrazzo was arched over with laurel trees. Numerous stone benches lined the low wall. Seven paused by one of the benches.

He saw Banner coming and he turned around to make a remark.

Laura and the jeep had vanished.

U. S. Senator Brooks U. Banner came on, plodding down the center of the Prado, humming significantly and in a tone-deaf sing-sing: *The Spaniard Who Blighted My Life.* He was wearing a big panama hat with the brim turned up all the way around after the fashion of Charlie Chan. His face was beefy and jowled and he had a red beezer of a nose that glowed like a lantern. A long Pittsburgh stogie was poking belligerently out of his scowling mouth. On his big fat body he was wearing a vast white suit that was as wrinkled as a pair of slept-in pajamas. His feet were shod in very comfortable rope-soled canvas *alpargatas.* His frosty little blue eyes were glaring at a copy of the newspaper *Revolucion* that he held in a big speckled hand.

But Seven didn't let appearances fool him. Banner's outward simple-minded sloppiness gave no hint of the acute encyclopedic brain inside his big grizzled head. He looked like an old-time saloon-keeper, but he was as astute as a nuclear physicist. He played poker superlatively. He held a law degree from Albany Law School. No matter where Banner was, he was completely at home. He knew everything and everybody. He could speak Spanish like a native. He would initiate Seven into the mysteries of Castro's Havana. And there were plenty.

"Tienes un fosforo?" Seven stepped forward. "Have you got a match?"

Banner glanced up from the newspaper, glowered at Seven, and produced a box of waxed Cuban matches without breaking his stride. He shambled on like a grumpy grizzly bear.

"So!" he snarled, chomping on the stogie. "God's gift to women. The Gregory Peck of the Counter Intelligence Corps. For once they did the right thing and sent *you.*"

Seven lit his cigarette and returned the matches to Banner.

Banner was continuing: "This's right up the alley for a skirt-chaser. I even had some misgivings when I heard that a gal was gonna meet you."

"That Laura!" beamed Seven. "She disappeared."

"Yass. Li'l Miss Flickertail. Now you see her, now you don't. To be successful in the under-

ground, you gotta be sneaky."

"Those big green eyes of hers could knock a man over at ten paces. Fascinating face. Do you know where I could find her again?"

"Forget Green Eyes!" snapped Banner. "Forget dames for five minutes, can't you! What the hell d'you think I'm running? A goddam Lonely Hearts Club?"

"You want me to take care of that blonde, don't you?"

"Yass! That's business." Banner's jowls were grim. "*Dangerous* business." He gnawed on the stogie. "I've been busting my chops trying to spring these last twenty-one good American boys from this stinking can, when along comes that blonde floozie and knocks —"

"Wait a minute!" said Seven sharply. "She's not like that at all!"

"No?" glared Banner. "Whadda *you* know about it?"

"Well, I —"

Some small boys ran past, waving red flags and yelling "*Yanqui* go home!"

Banner snarled: "Y'see what I'm up against! Aggravation! The dedicated Commies hate my guts!"

He shook his fist after the boys. Then a look of consternation crossed his beefy face and he hauled a large railroadman's watch out of his pocket.

"It's twenty to twelve. C'mon! We just got time to make it to the airport."

"Have you got a car?"

"Fidel's put a beeg black shiny limousine at my disposal. But I think, keed, he did it so's the driver could spy on me. That's why I'm walking. We'll grab a cab."

He ran for the next intersection, whistling shrilly through his teeth and hollering: "*Coche! Coche!* Taxi! Taxi!"

Seven caught up with him at the curb as he jerked open a taxicab door and told the driver to hustle them to Rancho Boyeros.

The driver obeyed. Tires squealing, they raced along the four-lane highway toward the international airport.

Banner had been thrown back on the seat by the car's acceleration. "No sir!" he said. "I can't have any monkeywrenches thrown into the machinery — not at *this* crucial stage. I'm ready to cinch the hawse-swap. We're sending in 53 million dollars' worth of drugs, food and equipment. I'm getting as palzy-walzy with Fidel as if we were long-lost brothers. It's easy cuz we both smoke big seegars. Y'know what he calls me? *El Hombre Gordo* — The Fat Man. Haaak!" He noisily cleared his throat, then a look of petulant mischief appeared on his florid face. "At the University they

used to call him *Bolo de Churre.* Greaseball. The name fits the dirty bugger."

"Back in the States," said Seven uncomfortably, "they say that we're being blackmailed."

"Yass?" He had an expression of injured truculence. "Waal, call it blackmail or extortion or anything you like. My job is to bail out as many people as I can. And if they don't like the way I'm handling it, let 'em send in somebody else. Lemme remind you. I ain't getting a thin dime for all this."

"There's nobody to take your place, Banner."

"Okay. Then shadddup. This cabbie's got big ears."

It was noon.

A single Compania Cubana de Aviacion plane was circling the airport. The Cuban pilot would be announcing to the passengers: *Adjuste su cinturones de asiento! Fasten your seat belts!*

Standing outside the wire fence, Banner and Seven watched the plane land and roll toward the landing stage.

A number of people emerged. Most of them, Seven guessed, were students from Latin American countries arriving to be trained in Che Guevara's guerrilla warfare tactics.

Peggy Hurley was the last one off, making a grand entrance coming down the ramp. Three men in black silk suits watched her descend the steps toward them. One of the men, with a sweeping pirate's mustache and grinning gold teeth, stepped forward and took her by the arm. He said a few words to her, then he led her across the concrete strip toward the gate, the other two black-suited ones following. They did not even bother her by going through Customs or Immigration.

Seven studied her. She wore a big floppy hat and a pink wool suit that showed all her shape. Even if she tried, it would have been impossible for her to stop jiggling when she walked. But she wasn't trying to stop.

"She's just the kinda broad," sneered Banner, "that'd appeal to a chicken-flicker."

"There must be some chicken-flicker in me then," retorted Seven, his black eyes remaining intently on her.

"She'd have no trouble at all getting Dr. Face Feathers to spit in Khrushy's eye."

Seven wet his suddenly dry lips with his tongue. "She's the most gorgeous thing I've seen outside of technicolor. I'll have to drop the Secretary of State a thank-you note for giving me this assignment."

"Keep your wits cool, sonny boy. You're watching an execution on its way to happen. That bombshell could blow up all of North America."

"Who's the guy with her?"

"That's Lieutenant Ernesto Sagrada," said Banner. "He's Fidel's chief girl-getter. And he's a nasty purger to boot."

They watched Peggy and Sagrada get into a black sedan. The two other men took another car.

"We gotta keep 'em in sight," growled Banner. He hurried along the wire fence toward their waiting taxi, Seven at his heels. "W'ell find out where they're stashing her. I'll do my best at my end to keep that bearded bastard away from her, Seven. I'll keep him in conferences around the clock. I'll take him skindiving and spearfishing, to jai-alai and cockfights. We got a picnic coming up that'll make a Hawaiian luau seem like a starvation diet. All this'll put a cramp in his bedside manner. I took care of Hitler that time at Berchtesgaden. Remember? This greaseball is bush league compared to *him*."

"I'm not so sure," said Seven, unconvinced.

"The rest'll be up to you. Get that blonde outta my hair! I don't care what you do, Seven Make love to her. Kidnap her. Do anything. Only get her outta Cuba!"

He woke up the driver who was taking a siesta in his cab.

Trailing the reception committee, they saw Peggy safely established in a big sugar-white mansion on Quinta Avenida in the heart of Miramar.

Banner said: "Now I'm gonna treat you to the best chow in this burg. You can't do anything else till after dark anyhow . . . Wait'll you taste *this* Moro crab!"

The night sky was glimmering with a big yellow Caribbean moon.

Seven scouted the white mansion. Two men sat in a car parked outside the front door. They were watchdogs, there for Peggy's protection only. If anything happened to her, Fidel would slit their throats.

A three-stringed *criollo* guitar slung over one shoulder, Seven slipped into the cobble-paved patio of the adjoining house. If anyone stopped him he could tell them that he was a troubadour on his way to serenade his lady-love. With a vision of luscious Peggy in his mind, he was in a mood for just that.

He scaled the wall easily. It offered no obstacle for an active member of the Alpine Club. Yet even on the dangerous north face of the Eigerwand he had never felt such an excited tremor. Eagerly he crossed the red Spanish tiles of a low roof.

A balcony window loomed ahead across a narrow alley. He made the long leap to the balcony railing, the body of the

guitar clattering hollowly against the sugar-white wall.

On the balcony his way was barred by a heavy ornate grille. He peered into a semi-darkened, spacious *sala* with a high ceiling and a marble floor. There was within a vague impression of gilded mirrors and satin-covered chairs and silver drawer clasps.

Leaning against the grille, he swung the guitar around to his chest and began softly to twang away, faking it romantically.

He heard the sound of high heels approaching cautiously on the marble floor. Turning his head, he caught a glimpse of a pale hand on a polished balustrade, then he saw her emerge from the darkness, fastening the sash of a thin night-robe about her slender waist.

She walked forward slowly, not sure of him, until she stood partly in the shadows.

Seven let the guitar swing back on his shoulder. *"El no vendrá esta noche,"* he said, speaking like a true Habanero. "He won't be coming tonight."

"Como tu lo sabe?" she asked easily in the same tongue. *"Quien eres tu?* How do you know? Who are you?"

"My name is Septimo," he answered, meaning seventh. "He's having another all-night session at the old Havana-Hilton with Senator Banner."

"I can wait. He can't talk forever." She gave him a long searching look through the grille. "Did he send you?"

Was she afraid that this was a Castro trick to test her loyalty to him?

"No. This is my own exclusive idea. I saw you today when you arrived at the airport and I haven't been able to get you out of my mind since." He heard his own heart thumping. He meant what he said.

"That's flattering. Thank you for the music. But you'd be much better off if you never saw me."

She had come there with only one purpose — and that wasn't to dally with another man.

The grille was firm between them like an iron duenna.

"Why waste a night like this, *querida?* The front gate is guarded. I can't come in. You slip out and I'll meet you in the garden.

She laughed softly. "No! I don't want to leave this house. Why should I?"

"Why shouldn't you?"

"I belong here. I belong to him. Two and a half years ago he vaccinated me."

Drawn by curiosity, she moved her face closer to the grille. He was shaken by the starved, haunted look on it. In almost five years only one man had made love to her — Fidel Castro. She was brimming full of pas-

sion and murder.

Her ravishing appearance and her breathing nearness were so electrifying that the words were drawn instinctively from him. He murmed: *"Yo te amor, querida."*

A mirthless smile revealed her gleaming white teeth in the moonlight. "I'm not fooled one bit by the flowery foreign language and the guitar. You're an American. Speak English."

"Yes," he responded, dropping the pretense. "But what I said still goes."

"Do you know what he's offered me? A kennel of Russian wolfhounds. And have you ever driven a Soviet-made Pobeda? He's going to give me one. I'll be dressed in a cobra-skin sheath. Then I'll really have a pair of snake-hips."

Every word she uttered was dripping with sarcasm. "You don't want any of those things," he said.

"No," she said. She no longer smiled, but the white teeth still gleamed. "All I want is him."

"No," he said quietly. "I'm going to take you away."

"You can't take me any place. They'll make sure nobody takes me away from him."

"If you don't leave with me — now, tonight — you'll never get out of Havana alive."

"I don't care about myself."

"Then care about the others. You'll destroy him, you'll destroy yourself and you'll destroy everything else."

She drew back the darkness hiding her face. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about killing Castro," he said.

She was wary. Nothing dumb about this blonde, he thought.

"Who said anything about that?" she asked innocently.

"We know all about it," he said.

"We?"

"The State Department, Senator Banner — me."

"How do I know who you are?"

"I'll prove it." He stuck his hand into his breast pocket and took out her laughing snapshot and held it out to her. "When was the last time you saw this?"

She stared at it. "A few days ago. In my apartment in New York."

"Only Virgina Peters could have given it to us. Right?" She didn't answer him. "We know all about you, Peggy."

"What if you do? I'll be doing everybody a favor."

"You won't be doing anybody a favor. Least of all, yourself. Listen to me, Peggy. You're not a prisoner. Not yet. All you have to do is walk out and meet me. You can still escape."

She shook her blonde head recklessly. "Not until I've gone

to bed with him. All I can think about is going to bed with him. It will all be very simple. He'll make love to me till he's tired. When he falls asleep he'll be helpless. Then I'll kill him."

"With what?" Seven tried to raise doubts with his voice. "Your bare hands?"

"If need be. Tommy showed me how."

"Peggy —"

"It's no use. You're wasting your time. My mind was made up a long time ago. Nothing will change it. I'm sticking till the bitter end." She turned her back on him as if to walk away. "Go! Go!"

"Now, wait —"

He heard a scuffling sound in the dark alley below. One of her protectors had heard the voices and was coming around to investigate.

Seven could not let himself be caught near Fidel's prize blonde. Men in Cuba had been castrated for committing a lot lesser crime.

Seven tensed and then leaped across the space from the balcony rail to the low red-tiled roof. As he scrambled down out of sight, he looked back once.

Peggy's pale face and golden hair were shimmering again behind the grille. He heard her whisper float across to him.

"I like you, Septimo. You remind me a lot of Tommy."

He came down to the cobblestones as lightly as a feather. Whatever happened after hearing her say that, was worth the risk.

As prearranged the day before, Seven met Banner at the Maine Monument near the sea wall on Malecon Drive at 2:30 p.m.

Banner was wearing a panama and a *guayabera,* a highly decorated sport shirt, hanging outside his baggy pants, that made him look like a weather balloon.

Scrawled on the monument shaft in red paint was: *26 de Julio.*

Beneath the bronze figures, Banner gnawed a dead stogie while he listened frowning to Seven's report of the night before.

"No soap?" he grunted when Seven finished.

"We'll never get her away in time," said Seven pessimistically.

"We gotta!" said Banner with an evil leer. "Here's the snapper: I knew they were gonna release twenty-one Americans, but I didn't know the names. Last night Castro handed me the list. Lissen to this. Tom Hurley ain't dead at all! His name's on that list!"

"Good lord, she'd been led to believe —"

"Like they say, the news of his death was slightly exaggerated."

"Then she has no reason to stay!"

"Exactly!" Savagely Banner chewed the stogie. "Tomorrow Pan Am will land a plane-load of ransom supplies and the same plane'll be used to evacuate the Americans. Hurley'll be on it when it leaves. Now! Yunnerstand what a pickle that leaves *her* in? It's impossible for her to get outta the country without Fidel's permission and he's not about to give her his permission. So how's she gonna leave, Huh?"

Seven couldn't think. He was a shattered victim of his own conflicting and turbulent emotions — his passionate emotional upset for Peggy, the mingling of joy and sadness of learning that Peggy's husband was alive, the helplessness of Peggy's situation in the guarded mansion in Miramar.

"I don't even know," he said glumly, "how *I'm* ever going to get out."

"Who cares about you?" said Banner gruffly. "You're expendable in this racket. My only concern is keeping her outta that gorilla's clutches."

"She won't believe me," said Seven miserably. "She won't take my mere word for it that Hurley is safe."

"She'll believe you." He pulled a folded copy of *El Mundo* out of his hip pocket and handed it to Seven. "Castro felt so magnanimous about the swap that he gave it headlines. All the released prisoners' names are published. Show it to her."

"This *will convince* her," said Seven darkly. "Then what?"

"All right, damn it! I suppose it's up to me, as usual, to get you all outta this goddam mess. Lemme think. Lemme think." Like a thundercloud, he began pacing back and forth in front of the monument, his loose shirttails flapping. He screwed the stogie into a corner of his mouth and turned with a jerk toward Seven. His shifty little blue eyes were full of malice.

"Big Gussie!" He punched one fist into his palm. "That's it!"

"Who's Big Gussie?"

"An airline hostess, you nitwit!" His squinting eyes gazed off across the harbor at the stark outline of Morro Castle in profound concentration. "I'll wire 'em to send her along with the crew. She may make the weight. And what's more, she's got the guts to carry it off."

"Carry what off?" said Seven, getting frantic.

"There's only one way that blonde's gonna escape. We gotta make her vanish into thin air right before their eyes."

"And how —?"

"Shaddap, dammit! Lemme figure out this higger-jigger. Then I'll tell you what *you're* gonna do, Seven!"

Peggy Hurley did what Seven told her to do, though he himself didn't know all the details.

Thrilled with the excitement of having Tommy again after all these years, of flying home with him, she tried to act calm as she left the white mansion on Qunita Avenida.

Her two guardian angels were outside the front door in a closed black Cadillac, men in black silk suits. This morning it was Teniente Sagrada himself and another swarthy man named Ibarra.

Dressed in a green knit town suit, carrying a white handbag and white gloves, Peggy strode nonchalantly out to her waiting Rolls Royce. At the wheel was Humberto, a large Negro dressed in a faultlessly tailored chauffeur's uniform.

"Buenos dias, Humberto," she said, getting into the back. "I'm going to do some shopping."

"Si, senorita," grinned Humberto, touching his cap.

The two tough chaperones trailed them as they drove off. They would not prevent her from doing anything. She was free to roam as she wished. They were there merely to see that she came to no harm. They would be impossible to shake.

In the shopping district, Peggy purchased a few souvenirs. She kept her eye on the time, glancing at her tiny gold wristwatch. Timing meant everything.

She said to Humberto: "Drive out toward the airport. I want to see some of the country."

"Si, senorita."

At the airport she started to get out of the Rolls Royce. "Wait here a minute, Humberto. I want to go to the ladies' room."

Humberto grinned and nodded.

Segrada and Ibarra got out of their car, stretching their cramped legs. They followed her into the huge waiting room of Rancho Boyeros.

Peggy passed by the door marked *Hombres* and went into the one that said *Mujeres.*

Sagrada and Ibarra sat down on a bench facing the rest room door.

"Puf!" complained Sagrada. "We sit too much!" He took a couple of coronas out of his pocket. "These are Fidel's own *tabacos.*" He offered one to Ibarra. "I stole them from his private box."

"Ah!"

They both lighted up and smoked leisurely.

On the runway outside was the gigantic Pan American World Airways DC-6B that was to take away the twenty-one American prisoners today. The wretched-looking men were already in the process of being checked aboard. There was fear on their faces and they were

white with prison pallor.

One of the two airline stewardesses on the flight came into the waiting room. She was a big brunette carrying a little blue flight bag with white lettering.

Her size in the tight blue uniform and the way she walked attracted all the male eyes. Sagrada and Ibarra stared appreciatively after her.

Once inside, the stewardess approached Peggy. "I'm Gussie."

"Hi," said Peggy, a quiver in her throat.

Gussie eyed her critically. "Senator Banner said you'd be about my size. You're a little bigger, I think, in some places. No time to lose." She looked around. Women were constantly coming and going in the rest room. "Come in here."

They went into one of the cubicles.

"Take off your suit," said Gussie. "You're going to put on my uniform." She opened the small blue bag she carried. "And this brunette wig."

"You mean," said Peggy in awe, "that when I leave here I'm supposed to be *you*?"

"That's the idea. Oh, don't worry. All they'll really see is the black hair and the shape in the uniform. They're waiting for a blonde to come out again."

"How will you get out, Gussie?"

Gussie dug into the bag. "I've got this shapeless muu-muu I'll slip on. I'll leave after you go. Those Custom officials glanced into my bag as I came in. Nothing suspicious in it. Every gal is entitled to change into a wig. When you go out, just walk straight on through the corridor toward the airstrip and get on the plane. They won't stop you."

"But you —"

"I'll be all right. In this thing look at me. Come on, come on. Time's a-wasting."

Peggy took off her own knit suit and squeezed into Gussie's uniform. It pulled very tight in a couple of places.

Peggy slid her hand self-consciously across her buttocks. "This skirt fits!"

"And how!" grinned Gussie.

Peggy stuffed the knit suit into the blue bag, then walked out of the cubicle and looked at herself in the wall mirrors. The change was startling, especially when she put on Gussie's sunglasses. She adjusted the black wig a bit. It was expensive and it looked natural.

Gussie, in the muu-muu, was ready to leave too. "I'll wait'll you're gone."

"Am I all right?" asked Peggy nervously.

"Uh-huh; Walk right out. Walk natural. It's okay. I've got a wiggle too."

"Oh, I hate to leave you behind!"

"Never mind me. You're the one who has to get out quick."

"Thanks, Gussie. Thanks a million."

"Good luck, Peggy."

Peggy gripped the blue bag tightly by the handle, left the women's room, staring straight ahead, and walked toward the concrete corridor that led out to the waiting plane.

The men's eyes ogled her. Sagrada and Ibarra suspended their puffing of their ill-gotten cigars, their gluttonous gaze on the big brunette in the tight blue uniform. *Oh! Ah Que mujer.* These American women! They had it *everywhere!*

Segrada and Ibarra swallowed hard as they squirmed on the hard bench. They forced their minds back to the business at hand and continued to watch the door of the ladies' room.

Ladies went in and out.

That blonde was taking a long time.

Outside the airport, Seven touched Gussie lightly on the arm. "I'm Seven," he said. "This way."

They walked to the end of the parking lot.

The jeep was waiting. Laura Mesa, in her *miliciana* uniform, was standing beside it, waiting, her thin aristocratic face serious, her large green eyes watching their approach.

They had a long rough road ahead of them and their safety would depend mostly on Laura.

Life insurance, thought Seven.

Laura smiled her little cat smile at Seven and got in behind the wheel. She didn't say anything.

"Hop in," said Seven to Gussie.

Gussie grinned wryly at the hard flat seats. "Lucky I have the padding for this."

"Your ration card," said Seven, handing it to her.

She glanced at it. "No more meat and potatoes." She sighed. "Oh, well, I was thinking of reducing anyway."

This shouldn't be too bad, he thought; an armed escort for two attractive girls.

As they drove off down the road away from Havana, heading south, there was a rumble in the sky. All three looked and watched the big Pan Am passenger plane banking northward for Miami International Airport, heading for home. The passengers on board were beginning to relax, beginning to smile.

Senator Banner was with the last of his ransomed prisoners. Peggy was with Tom.

They watched the plane fly out of sight, each with silent thoughts.

Then Laura gunned the jeep's engine. They had a long way to go.

(Continued from Other Side)

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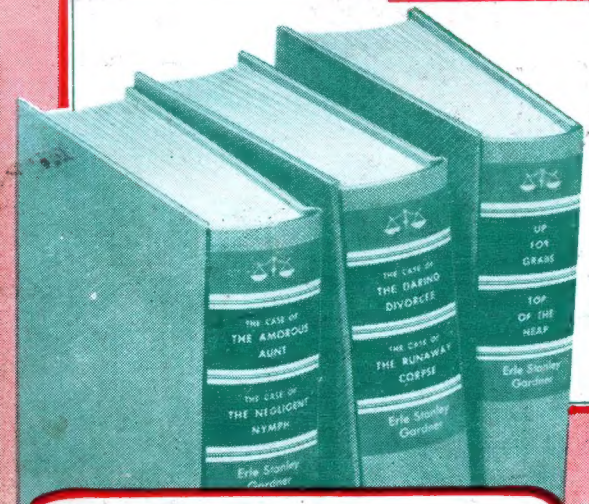

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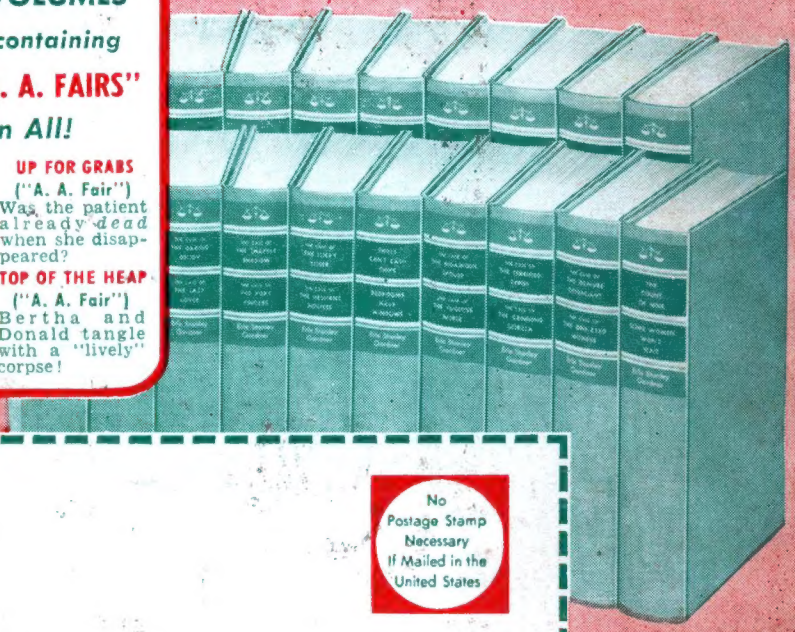

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